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Israel Kills Commandos, Destroys Homes

Israeli border police shot and killed four Palestinians and wounded another during an attack in the hills south of Hebron.

There was no independent confirmation of the report that the commandos were killed in a shoot-out. There have been a number of cases in which commandos were killed after being abducted.

Israeli intelligence reported the five Palestinians were members of a commando group responsible for the killing of five Israelis and the wounding of 18 others since 1983. The group, according to Israeli army reports, hid in the Hebron hills until they were discovered and attacked by border police October 6.

Three days later on October 9, the Israeli army imposed a curfew on their villages while demolishing the homes of their families.

The house demolition sparked demonstrations in Surif. Hundreds of angry residents marched in the village chanting anti-Israeli slogans and displaying victory signs.

Surif villagers demonstrate alongside the demolished home of one of the families of the killed commandos./AFP photo.

The five Palestinians were later identified as: Mohammed Hassan Ghnaimat, Mahmoud Ahmad Ghnaimat and Mohammed Adnan, of Surif; Ali Khalayle of Samu' and Mohammed Hamid al-Toss of Jaba'. Al-Toss was reported to have sustained serious injuries in the attack. Israeli military officials report the five men were not part of a PLO group. They had apparently operated on their own initiative.

The families of the five heard the news of the group's discovery from local papers. They then reportedly prepared themselves for the consequences. Sources in Surif say the families emptied their homes of furniture and arranged to sleep elsewhere since it has been common practice by the Israeli army to demolish the homes of suspected attackers. The arrival of army photographers a day after the shoot-out confirmed the families' suspicion.

All five houses were destroyed October 9 virtually simultaneously. According to *Al Fajr* sources in Surif, the families of three of the men are "living in fear that the Israeli military might punish them even further." They suspect the army may call them in for interrogation or impose restrictions on their movements. The families last saw the men over three months ago and were not aware of their actions, the sources said.

According to the Hebrew press, the five men were organised and led by Mohammed Hassan Ghnaimat, who worked for a few years as a building contractor inside the 'green line' and was fluent in Hebrew. He reportedly bought several pistols and machineguns from Israelis. The group then used the ammunition to attack Israeli targets. The group's first operation, according to press reports, was an attack on Israeli vacationers near Wadi Foukin village, south-west of Jerusalem, last year. One Israeli was injured in this operation. All five men ranged in age between 25 and 31.

Reports of al-Toss's arrest varied in the Hebrew and Arab press. A report in *Yediot Aharonot*, a Hebrew daily, said that al-Toss surrendered. The paper then adds that he sustained serious injuries in the shoot-out. The report said that the border police had discovered the men as they hid in a cave near Hebron. They immediately opened fire at them and a fire exchange occurred. "After a while a man came from behind a rock with his hands raised in surrender. He was the only man in the group to remain alive. He however sustained heavy injuries," said the report. Other reports mentioned only that he was seriously wounded in the shoot-out, but said nothing of surrender.

Thousands of Israeli border police and army troops participated in an intensive search campaign for the group in a wide area south of Jerusalem. Israeli intelligence suspected the presence of a commando gorup in that area since a number of attacks on Israeli targets were carried out in the vicinity. The latest attack was the killing October 2 of an unmarried Israeli

Continued on page 13

Arafat Vows to Investigate, Punish Hijackers

The three-day drama aboard the Achille Lauro passenger ship ended October 9 when the four Palestinian hijackers surrendered to Egyptian and Red Cross officials at Port Said, Egypt.

This followed an intensive, round-the-clock diplomatic effort by PLO, Egyptian and Italian officials. The negotiations which also included other European representatives took place in an attempt to spare bloodshed and avoid strain on excellent Palestinian-Italian relations.

Unconfirmed reports said that the hijackers had put forward three conditions before releasing the luxury Italian cruiser. They demanded a promise of pressure on Israel to release 50 Palestinian prisoners, guaranteed freedom and a promise that they not be handed over to the PLO.

Yasser Arafat, who previously condemned the hijacking, said he would request that the Egyptian government turn the hijackers over to the PLO "so that it could investigate their conduct and punish them if necessary."

Italy may also send Egypt a similar request if it is proven that the hijackers actually killed an American passenger on board as rumoured. Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi had said that an American passenger of the Jewish faith had been reported missing and may have been killed by the hijackers. Earlier reports of two Americans killed on board were disproven.

The four Palestinians, reportedly Lebanese-born in their early twenties, had commandeered the ship with over 400 passengers on board as it sailed from Alexandria to Port Said. They redirected the ship to Tartus port in Syria and then to Larnaca in Cyprus after Syrian officials denied them entry into Syrian waters. When Cypriot officials followed suit the hijackers took the ship to Port Said where the ordeal came to end.

The PLO and all Palestinian factions, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, came out strongly against the hijacking. "Italy is a close friend of ours," said Yasser Arafat in a letter to Craxi. "We condemn such an act which is directed at a country which took a noble stand toward the Palestinian cause." Following the October 1 Israeli air strike on Palestinian headquarters in Tunis, the Italian government voted with other EEC members to protest the Israeli action.

In an interview with the American ABC News Arafat declined any responsibility for the hijacking saying that the four men could have acted on their own initiative and against the PLO's will. "There are outside groups that the PLO cannot control. The PLO cannot watch everything in the same manner as world governments cannot. But it is the policy of the PLO to object to such terrorism against innocent civilians."

The hijacking was also condemned by other Arab countries, including Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, as well as the Socialist bloc.

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* **Awad Abdel Fattah** writes the third part of our Gaza Series. This week's article is on labour conditions in the Gaza Strip. **Pages 8&9.**

Merchants, Students Strike in Protest of 'Iron Fist'

A general commercial strike — the first one in months — was forcefully broken up by Israeli soldiers in Ramallah.

Shops closed down in the Manara area of the city centre on Thursday morning October 10, in response to a call by local institutions to protest the Israeli army's 'iron fist' policy.

Since being revived by the Israeli government in mid-August, more than half a dozen residents have been shot and killed, and more than 80 residents arrested. Mostly students, unionists and journalists, the 80 are serving six-month administrative detention orders. A total of 21 others, including 18 ex-prisoners freed in the May 20 prisoner swap, have been deported.

Sources in Ramallah told *Al Fajr* that Israeli soldiers drove through the city about 10:30 am calling on merchants to open their shops. The soldiers threatened those who did not with severe punishment. Shops were beginning to reopen shortly, before 11:00 am.

The soldiers however reclosed the Manara area after discovering a 'suspicious object.' There were no reports from the scene.

Students at Bir Zeit and Bethlehem Universities went on strike on the same day in compliance with the protest call. All university activities were suspended. Najah University which opened last week following two months of closure was on its weekend vacation.

One day earlier, students at Najah University went on a two-hour strike in protest of the administrative detentions. At least 16 Najah students are being held under the detention orders. The strike, one of the first supported by all student groups and factions, included a fast to the end of the day in support of the administrative detainees' declared hunger strike (see related story).

UN Resolution Condemns Israel

The United Nations Security Council with the United States abstaining passed a resolution condemning Israel for attacking the PLO headquarters in Tunisia.

In their initial response to the Israeli raid, the US had supported the raid, but later altered their stance somewhat by refraining from using their veto to destroy the UN resolution. The UN Security Council resolution was welcomed by officials in Tunisia, but Israeli officials expressed their disappointment in the resolution.

The UN resolution denounced the Israeli raid. It also called on Israel to stop attacking countries in the region and urged the UN General Assembly members to adopt all measures to deter Israel from attacking other countries. The resolution also said that Tunisia was entitled to compensation for its damage and losses. The UN Security Council asked the UN Secretary General to write a report on ways to implement the resolution by November 30.

In a related story, Palestinian sources in Tunisia said that an espionage ring was discovered in Tunisia after the Israeli raid. The detainees — some of whom are foreigners — admitted supplying Israel with reports on Palestinian military deployment and the activities of Arab embassies in Tunisia. According to *al-Anwar* newspaper in Tunisia, one tourist was arrested on charges that he was planning to place explosives in the Soseh Port.

Non-resident Students Forced out of Government Schools

Palestinian pupils without Israeli identity papers can no longer register at government schools in the West Bank.

Israeli military authorities distributed last week a memorandum to the headmasters of West Bank government schools. The memorandum ordered them to cancel the registration of new non-resident pupils for this academic year. The headmasters were also ordered to forbid others to register next year.

Non-resident pupils who attended the schools last year were permitted to continue, however. The pupils estimated at nearly 500 throughout the West Bank, were all born abroad to Palestinian parents who have moved back to the West Bank because of business or personal reasons. Though the parents have resident status, the children do not.

It is not clear why the Israeli authorities took this decision, which was termed "unfair" by parents and education officials alike. The decision was only made public five weeks after the schools opened. This disrupts the school year for these students. Only a few have been able to register at the crowded private schools. The rest may lose an entire academic year.

Over 100 children have been affected in the Ramallah area alone. Ibrahim Suleiman, head of the Education Department in Ramallah, told *Al Fajr* that the military authorities should have consulted his department before making such a decision. At least, he said, they should have made it before schools started so that pupils could have known what alternative avenues to take. He said the decision was most "disadvantageous" to pupils and their families who want their children to have an Arabic education.

Although the decision will not dissuade Palestinian families who wish to return to the West Bank from doing so, it will cramp private schools to beyond their capacity. Suleiman told *Al Fajr* there was no logical reason behind the military decision except to "inconvenience the parents of these children and disrupt their education."

Golan Apple Growers Win Price War

Once again — this time in apple season — Golan Heights residents have proven that through a unified stand they can defeat Israeli attempts to back them into a corner.

Golan apple growers won a battle against Israeli merchants who attempted to put a low ceiling on the price of Golan apples. Early last month the merchants told Golan growers that they would not pay more than IS500 (33 cents) per kilo of apples.

The Israeli merchants believed that since the bulk of Golan produce is sold in Israeli markets the Golan growers would be forced to sell at the low rate. They also knew the Golanis had refrigerated storage available for only 100,000 boxes out of an expected crop of more than a million boxes.

In response, however, Golan residents formed two interim committees in Majdal Shams and Baqa'ata villages in the Golan to coordinate a boycott of the Israeli merchants. The committees set the price of a kilo at IS800 and forbade anybody to sell at less than that. Faced with the Golan opposition, Israeli merchants backed down and agreed to pay the IS800.

One Golan grower told *Al Fajr* that Israeli merchants had agreed between themselves to offer the low price for Golan apples, the finest brand of apples in the area. Golanis said that this price would have meant a great loss.

Golan residents said that unlike last year they have had a good harvest. Last year, the apple orchards were struck by disease causing huge losses. This year however the harvest is expected to be above average.

The slain body of Sylvia Rafael (alias Esther Paltzur) lies slumped over the railing of the yacht Palestinian gunmen seized September 25.

In Larnaca Killings

3 Israelis Reportedly Top Mossad Agents

The three Israelis killed by commandos in Larnaca, Cyprus two weeks ago were actually top intelligence agents, a London newspaper revealed.

The conservative British *Daily Telegraph* reported October 3 that the Israelis were not Haifa yachters on a Yom Kippur holiday as Israel claimed. Instead, said the paper, the three were top agents of the Mossad.

The killing of the Mossad agents, by two Syrian-backed Palestinians and one Briton shocked the Israeli intelligence establishment. Israel announced that its air strike on the PLO headquarters in Tunis was in retaliation for the killings.

According to the *Daily Telegraph* report, the two men and one woman were on a mission to monitor the movement of Palestinians in the Cypriot port. The Israelis had reportedly used similar intelligence groups in their capture of Palestinian boats carrying commandos to Lebanon.

Quoting diplomatic and intelligence sources in London, the newspaper said that the woman, who was identified by Israel as Esther Paltzur, is in fact Sylvia Rafael, a well-known Israeli Mossad agent. Rafael is known to have taken part in sabotage attacks against top PLO figures in Europe in the early 1970s. The same woman is also said to be responsible for the assassination of a top PLO official in Beirut in 1981.

Al Ittihad daily, published in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the Arab Gulf, reported as well that the man posing as Sylvia's husband Reuven Paltzur served as deputy Mossad head. The paper also reported that the man called Avraham Avneri was indeed the director of Mossad operations in Europe.

The three Israelis posing as tourists were killed when the commandos seized a yacht anchored at the Larnaca marina. The commandos then announced that they were willing to exchange the hostages for Palestinian commandos captured at high seas by the Israeli navy several months ago.

The woman was shot dead at the beginning of the operation as she tried to escape. The two men were killed 10 hours after they were taken hostage and after the Israelis did not answer the hijackers.

Following the operation, an unidentified caller told the Agence France Press that the three Israelis were intelligence agents collecting information on the movement of Palestinians in Cyprus.

The PLO Cyprus office disavowed any connection with the incident, and condemned it.

The three commandos were remanded into custody by a Nicosia court last week after the Cypriot government turned down a request by Israel to extradite them. No date has been set for their trial.

The burnt Peugeot belonging to carpet peddlar Yusef Mustafa Manasra./AFP photo.

Israeli Vandals Torch Arab Merchant's Car

by Said al-Ghazali

Israeli vandals — possibly settlers — set fire to a Palestinian merchant's car and wares.

Carpet peddlar Yusef Mustafa Manasra said nearly 20 armed Israelis appearing to be settlers destroyed his car and carpets belonging to him and six other peddlars October 6.

Manasra, from Bani Na'im in the Hebron district, said he and six other carpet merchants were driving on the main road to Beit Shemesh, 40 kilometres northwest of Hebron. He said the merchants peddle their carpets regularly in the Israeli town and surrounding areas.

Manasra said that he noticed as he was driving a vehicle ahead parked across the road. Standing around it were the settlers carrying clubs and stones.

Fearing that he might be attacked by the mob, Manasra stopped about 400 metres away and tried to turn his Peugeot around. The settlers however chased his car and blocked its way with their vehicle. The settlers then pelted Manasra's car with stones, smashing its windows.

Manasra said he and his friends jumped out of the car and fled toward the hill nearby. He then saw the settlers spray the vehicle with gas and set it afire. "The vehicle was completely burnt with all the carpets estimated at JD1000 (US 2500 dollars) inside," Abdel Mahdi Manasra, Yusef's nephew, told *Al Fajr*.

The Bani Na'im merchants were later picked up by another Hebronite driver. They were taken to report the incident at Beit Shemesh police headquarters.

Abdel Mahdi said the harassed merchants were then told by the police that one of the settlers had been arrested for questioning. He said the settler's family were also at police headquarters and that the family further insulted and threatened the merchants in front of the police. Abdel Mahdi told *Al Fajr* that one settler told them, "It is not sufficient that your vehicle was burnt. You yourselves must be killed and burned."

Abdel Mahdi said all Bani Na'im merchants are now afraid to peddle their wares in the Beit Shemesh area. "It will be at least two or three weeks before anybody feels safe enough to go there," he said. The merchants also plan to take the case to court and sue for damages.

Also on the evening of October 6 dozens of settlers from the Nablus region formed armed units to patrol the Arab town of Qalqilya. The settlers divided into three main groups. One went to the Kfar Saba-Qalqilya road, the second to the road connecting Petah Tikva with Qalqilya and the third to the Nablus-Qalqilya road.

Israeli soldiers then erected several checkposts on these roads closing off the area. The soldiers ordered the settlers to disperse. The settlers reportedly said that their aim in patrolling was to pressure Israeli authorities to escalate their security measures in the occupied territories. They vowed to patrol any area in the West Bank if stronger measures were not introduced in the area to counter increasing Palestinian resistance.

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Administrative Detainees Declare Hunger Strike

More than 80 Palestinians held in administrative detention declared an open hunger strike to protest their illegal detention without trial.

The political prisoners, all of whom are held at Jnaid Prison in Nablus and Bir Sabe' Prison in the Naqab issued a statement October 8 announcing their intention to strike beginning October 9. Lawyer Jawad Boulus visited Jnaid Prison October 8. He quoted four of his clients — Samir Sbaihat, Khalil Ashour, Kamel Jbail and Hussein al-Fakha' — as saying that the hunger strike is politically motivated, unlike strikes in the past which were in protest of poor conditions in the prison. Boulus said the detainees were protesting the illegal principle of administrative detentions.

The prisoners' statement smuggled out of the jail appealed to "our masses in the occupied territories" to stand by the prisoners during the strike. "Our struggle is part of the Palestinian people's struggle," read the statement as quoted by the Israeli communist party's Arabic daily *Al Ittihad*. The statement read that the administrative detentions were part of the overall repressive measures by Israeli authorities intended to suppress Palestinians.

In the statement, prisoners equated the administrative detentions and other repressive measures with the tactics used by the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Earlier, the Israeli military court in Nablus postponed the hearing on October 8 of an appeal by 15 of the detainees. The hearing was set for November 22. The detainees are appealing to the Israeli head of military courts their detentions without trial.

Administrative detention was revived by Israeli authorities last August after nearly five years without it. The number of administrative detainees rose quickly and reached more than 80 in slightly over a month.

The detainees include students, workers, unionists, and journalists. The latest case of administrative detention was that of journalist Mohammed Amireh, *Al Quds* Arabic daily's Nablus correspondent, who was picked up on October 8. Before his arrest he was confined by a military order to town arrest in his hometown of Nablus.

Though none of the detainees have been charged with any crime, the Israeli military intends to hold them on the six-month detention orders indefinitely. The military has claimed that the detainees are guilty of inciting political activity.

In another story, Palestinian political prisoners in Asqalan Prison ended their hunger strike begun last week. The prisoners had begun their strike following an incident of brutal treatment in which they were teargassed in their cells September 11.

Reports from the prison say prisoners have lost all the rights they had achieved over the past 18 years of prisoners' struggles. As a result, lawyers Abed Asali, Usama Odeh, Adnan Shu'aibi and Shaher al-Aruri, who visited the prison October 8, said that the situation inside is about to explode again.

The lawyers, quoting prisoners inside, said that the prison guards have renewed their provocations and intimidations during the exercise period. The time for exercise has been cut from 2.5 to 1.5 hours daily. Prisoners also complain that distribution of the local Arabic newspapers has stopped since last month. Prisoners have also been stripped of their authority in the prison kitchen.

Earlier, lawyer Felicia Langer, who managed to visit the prison by a High Court order *nisi* on October 7, said that the prison authorities have confiscated all personal belongings of prisoners, including radios, books and notebooks.

Ramallah Bus Accident Kills Driver, Hurts 12 Kids

A school bus and truck collided in Ramallah killing the bus driver and injuring 13 children, four of them seriously.

The accident, the most recent in Ramallah history, occurred Saturday morning, October 5. The Evangelical School bus was on its regular morning round picking up students from their homes in the city. A truck collided with it on Parks Street. Eyewitnesses say the bus driver was approaching the intersection To Parks and Jaffa Streets when a speeding truck crashed into its left side. The bus sustained heavy damage and all the children sitting on the left side were injured.

Bus driver, 75-year-old Yunis Hassan Daifallah, was critically wounded. He later died after being rushed to the New Ramallah Hospital.

As news of the accident spread through Ramallah, hundreds of residents gathered and helped to evacuate the injured children to hospital. Three children with serious injuries were rushed to the Israeli Hadassah Hospital in West Jerusalem. More advanced medical equipment is available there. The three children are George Hanna Khanouf, 5, who had his left foot cut off in the accident; Rami Habash, 6; and Ramzi Sbitany, 6.

Khanouf's severed foot was placed in a refrigrator and sent to Hadassah Hospital. The limb, however, was too fractured and could not be replanted.

A fourth child, Mohammed Sbitany, 5, was also transferred to Hadasssah. The rest were transferred to the New Ramallah Hospital, where a state of emergency was declared.

Most of the wounded were released from hospital and the rest are expected to be sent home soon. Local newspapers reported that two of the four children sent to Hadassah Hospital have survived the critical stage.

The Evangelical School in Ramallah run by the Anglican Church enrols 367 students from kindergarten to the end of junior high. It is regarded as one of the best private schools in the city.

Palestinian Journalist Disappears

The Arab Journalists' Association in the occupied territories expressed concern over the disappearance of journalist Hassan Abd al-Halim, an *Al Fajr* Arabic reporter.

In a press release issued October 8, the AJA said that Abd al-Halim, from the village of Kattaneh in the Ramallah district, left home October 3 and never returned. His wife said that he cannot have left the country since his Jordanian passport was left at home.

The AJA have appointed lawyer Jonathan Kuttab to attempt to ascertain the whereabouts of Abd al-Halim. Kuttab is checking the various Israeli jails.

Abd al-Halim is the only breadwinner of his seven-member family.

Hassan Abd al-Halim

Israeli Violations of US Law Go Unpunished

News Analysis
by Ghassan Bishara

Firemen, policemen and soldiers inspecting the ruins of the PLO headquarters after the Israeli raid. /AFP Photo

The Israeli bombing of PLO headquarters in Tunis, with the aid of American-made F-15 jets, not only is a violation of international law, the UN charter and the integrity of a sovereign state, but a closer look reveals that Israel also defied American law under which it was granted US weapons.

There are exceptions to every rule and the exception in the case of the US Arms Export Control Act (AECA) is undoubtedly Israel. There are two previous cases in which Israel is believed to have violated the terms of the AECA.

The first incident was the 1978 invasion of Lebanon. The second was the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. And now we have the bombing of the PLO office in Tunis.

As glaring as the Israeli violations were in the previous two cases, it was never officially determined whether or not a violation did in fact occur. This time, the conclusion regarding the legality of the Israeli attack on Tunis from an American perspective will no doubt be the same.

Israel has never been found to be in violation of the terms of the Arms Control Export Act. However under the terms of American law governing arms sales to foreign countries, the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement of July 1952 stipulates that these weapons "will be used solely to maintain internal security, (and) legitimate self-defence of the area of which it is a part..." A country found to be in substantial violation of the AECA, the law further specifies, will have "no credits issued (for it) and no guarantees extended" to it. Congress can, in addition, impose sanctions on a country that violates these terms. The arms embargo clamped on Turkey, following its invasion of Cyprus, is an example of what some believe should be the US reponse to repeated Israeli violations of the agreement.

In the first instance, Israel invaded Lebanon in the spring of 1978, occupying the territory south of the Litani River with the use of American-made weapons. Israel withdrew from the territory, only after imposing the will of Sa'ad Haddad upon the south Lebanese. During the invasion, Israel used American-made weapons, and in doing so, was suspected of violating the terms of the AECA. In his report to Congress, Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State during the Carter administration, said that a violation had possibly occurred. This threat of investigation by the Carter administration, is now believed to have been the main reason for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 1978.

The second case in which a violation most obviously did occur was in Israel's unprecedented 1981 attack upon the Iraqi nuclear reactor. American-made F-16's flew from Israel, over both Jordanian and Saudi Arabian territory, despite the watchful eye of the newly-purchased Saudi Arabia AWACs system, and dumped the equivalent of 16 tons of TNT on the Iraqi reactor, transforming it into a pile of metal and concrete. Despite worldwide criticism and outrage, the Israeli use of American-made weapons went unchallenged in the final analysis.

Following the bombing of the PLO offices in Tunis, again with the use of American-made F-15's, the question of possible AECA violations has arisen once again. Answering repeated questions regarding the likelihood of an Israeli violation, State Department and White House spokespersons made noncommittal remarks to the effect that an investigation into possible violations would be "looked into."

The final results of such an investigation, a respected Washington correspondent remarked, will not differ from previous ones. In fact, this correspondent, who wished to remain anonymous, said, "It is a waste of time to look into that aspect of the operation."

Israeli Raid Sparks Cairo Tunis Demonstrations

In the aftermath of the Israeli raid on the PLO's Tunisian headquarters, anti-Israeli sentiment is running high.

In Cairo, leaders of the five major Egyptian opposition parties called on Mubarak's government to sever ties with Israel. They also demanded Mubarak condemn US policies in the region.

The representatives of the Egyptian opposition parties held a press conference in Cairo October 7 and issued a joint statement. They demanded Egypt immediately stop the process of normalisation with Israel and break relations with it. The opposition representatives also called for a freeze on all Egyptian-Israeli agreements. The opposition statement sharply criticised US policies in the Middle East and labelled the US as directly responsible for the Israeli raid. The representatives also criticised the peace process begun at Camp David for permitting Israel to control the area.

The day before on October 6 angry Egyptian and Tunisian demonstrators marched in Cairo and Tunis. The demonstrations, which were organised by the two countries' oposition parties, attracted thousands of demonstrators. They carried placards and shouted slogans condemning the Israeli raid and US policy.

In Cairo the demonstration coincided with the 12th anniversary of the 1973 October War. More than 4000 demonstrators, including Khaled Gamal Abdel Nasser, the son of the former Egyptian president, passed in front of the Israeli embassy in Cairo. The embassy was heavily guarded by large numbers of Egyptian soldiers and policemen.

Ibrahim Shukri, head of the Labour Party in Egypt, spoke to reporters from the crowd. "We demand the Egyptian government break off diplomatic relations with Israel immediately in response to the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters," he said.

The Cairo demonstration was organised by the supporters of former President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Some 500 students, described as Nasserites, participated in the demonstration. They were joined by groups of Islamic fundamentalists who shouted slogans against Zionism and chanted "God is great".

In a related story, seven Israelis were killed and two wounded in Ras Burqa in the Sinai October 5, when a frustrated Egyptian soldier opened fire at the Israelis. Israel reported that a group of Israeli tourists arrived at Ras Burqa 15 kilometres north of Tal Nuwaiba' in the Sinai at 4:00 pm. They climbed hill of sand to ski. When they began skiing, the Egyptian soldier opened fire at them killing seven and wounding four.

Official Egyptian sources said the soldier was "crazy" and that he had disarmed four soldiers, and killed one officer before firing at the Israeli tourists.

Also in Tunisia a policeman opened fire indiscriminately at a crowd of Jews living on Jarb island, 15 kilometres south of Tunisia. Three Jews and two Muslims were killed and 15 others injured.

Reports said the incident occurred in front of a Jewish synagogue following prayers the morning of October 8. The policeman himself was seriously injured by other police before being arrested.

Riot police (foreground) stand guard around the Israeli embassy in Cairo. Demonstrators wielding the Palestinian flag protested the Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis./AFP photo.

Attacks on Israeli Army Continue

Increasing military attacks by clandestine commandos and individual Palestinians continue to shatter the 'peace' imposed by the continued presense of the Israeli army in the occupied territories.

Last week, the western-most town in the West Bank, Qalqilya, was placed under curfew twice following petrol bomb attacks on Israeli targets. The first one was hurled at an Israeli bus travelling near the Safin village crossroad October 2. The second was also thrown at an Israeli bus on October 3. The Arab quarter close to Kfar Saba was curfewed and its residents kept for a whole night in the centre of the quarter.

On October 8 an explosive charge atttached to a timer exploded near the 'civil administration' headquarters in Beit El, near Ramallah. The device was placed in a restaurant located in the vicinity of the 'civil administration.' Israeli soldiers are said to dine frequently in the restaurant. Israel Radio reported no casualties but admitted that the bomb caused extensive damage to the restaurant.

On the same day and one day after the Israeli authorities announced that the security forces had discovered an active armed cell in the Hebron area, several rounds of automatic fire were directed at a military bus travelling on the main road between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim settlement at noon. The radio reported no casualties and said that several Arabs were arrested for questioning.

In Gaza, a fire bomb was thrown at an Israeli military vehicle driving on the main road leading to an Israeli settlement east of Gaza City on October 7. The surrounding area was placed under curfew and Israeli soldiers began a campaign of search and arrest. Gaza reporters said that many farmers were arrested.

In Jerusalem Israeli sappers dismantled an explosive charge at 9:00 am October 6. The device was placed in an Egged bus stop at Jaffa Gate.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities announced that they arrested three members of a cell said to be responsible for a number of military attacks. Two members of the group are from the Shu'fat refugee camp near Jerusalem and the third is from the village of al-Ram, north of Jerusalem.

Israel Radio reported that the group was accused of planting several explosive charges in the Beit Shemesh area west of Jerusalem and other areas. In all, the radio said 12 Israelis were injured in attacks by the group.

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Israel's Raid Ignites Further Violence

October 1, Israeli planes bombed the headquarters of the PLO in Tunis. Contrary to Israeli claims the air attack was meant to derail the Palestinian-Jordanian peace process which had reached a crucial stage.

With British willingness to receive a PLO-Jordanian delegation, and US approval of King Hussein's UN speech Israel was forced into a corner. Under the pretext of terrorism and following the Larnaca killings, Israel struck at the PLO base. Though maybe able to fool President Reagan, they were unable to fleece the rest of the world.

Neither Arafat nor the PLO were behind the Larnaca killings and Arafat himself was too involved in the sensitive peace efforts to risk the world's anger.

In addition to blowing the latest chance for peace, Israel's bombing also blew wide open a chestful of anti-Israeli, anti-American sentiment Arafat had been attempting to keep under lock and key. During Arafat's careful attempts to pursue a peaceful solution, there was at least an unwritten agreement between Palestinians to restrain themselves. Pro and anti-Arafat Palestinian factions were waiting to see what would come of his attempts.

When the reply came in the form of the bombing, the moderate elements in the PLO found it impossible to keep things under control. Radical Palestinians used the bombing as proof that 'might means right' and that only through the armed struggle could Palestinians regain their just rights.

The violence that was unleashed will not be confined to Palestinians, as evidenced in the recent actions by Egyptian and Tunisian soldiers only days after the raid. Israelis and Jews were gunned down in Arab territory.

The attack on the PLO will result in many actions displeasing to Israel and to the US. By igniting Arab anger it will be difficult for any Palestinian or Arab leader to put a lid on it. With the Israeli action, Israel has consciously chosen to give up the possibilities for peace in exchange for another more violent and longer round of violence.

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Soldiers Play Games in Hebron, But we Pay the Price

by Maher Abukhater

When the Israeli government decided to send reinforcements of soldiers into the occupied territories, it was thinking of ways to stop growing attacks on Israelis in these areas. What the government was hoping was that through intimidation and terrorism it could quell Palestinian resistance.

This was most evident in Hebron and surrounding areas. Last month hundreds of Jewish settlers from the militant Kiryat Arba settlement were let loose in Halhoul, just outside Hebron, to terrorise the town of 20,000. For three straight hours the settlers rampaged through Halhoul, smashing windows in homes and cars, attempting to set fire to shops and destroying as much town property as possible.

The settler terror followed an armed attack on an Israeli bus travelling through Halhoul. Only two hours before the settlers appeared, the Israeli army had placed the town under curfew. Residents were not allowed outside their homes. No one — except the settlers — was allowed in or out of the town. Yet the army was nowhere in sight two hours later when the settlers arrived. Defenceless Halhoul residents took refuge in the inner rooms of their homes. There was nothing they could do to stop the settlers short of outright confrontation in which case they would have lost.

The settlers would not have entered Halhoul without government acquiescence. Such government-settler conspiracies are becoming more the rule than the exception these days. Since it would not look good for a regular army to terrorise a defenceless population, the government brings in the settlers to do its dirty work. After the settlers go on a spree of vandalism for a few hours, the army appears out of nowhere as the 'good guys' to 'protect' the terrified population and 'force' the 'uncontrollable' settlers out of town.

The picture is a little bit different in nearby Hebron though the actors are the same. Even though it is possible for the Israeli government to close its eyes for a few hours to settler terrorism in Halhoul, it is much more difficult for it to do the same or play the same game for days on end in the much larger city of Hebron. Since outright terrorism in larger cities is not good public relations, intimidation proves more useful. The Israeli army then becomes more capable of carrying out the task without inviting criticism or denouncement either locally or internationally.

For several weeks now veteran Israeli soldiers have been given the task of patrolling the streets of major West Bank and Gaza cities. Their duty, as defined by the Defence Ministry, is to check everyone who looks the least bit suspicious and to 'thoroughly' search him. For the soldiers this means employing methods that include intimidation and, more importantly, humiliation. Given such freedom of action, the soldiers often take the liberty of mocking the Palestinian population and treating the people as objects put on the earth for their entertainment.

Such intimidation and humiliation has been reported both in the local Arab and Hebrew press of late. Such tales have naturally encouraged foreign journalists to travel to Hebron and other West Bank towns for firsthand accounts.

I myself accompanied to Hebron last week a foreign journalist who wished to see for himself army provocation in that West Bank city. Upon our arrival in Hebron in the early afternoon we came across a military foot patrol who were stopping and checking pedestrians and cars at random. My companion wished to photograph the soldiers 'in action'. We walked to them. I was slightly hesitant and a little apprehensive that, being Palestinian, I might have to undergo the thorough search Palestinian Arabs receive at the hands of the army. We have learned from experience that it is better to avoid the areas where soldiers are stationed in order not to make direct contact with them. We have all seen and heard of the cases in which soldiers have ordered Arabs to publicly humiliate themselves by dancing in the street or kissing a donkey. When the Arabs have refused the soldiers have beaten them.

When the foreign reporter and I reached the soldiers he showed them his credentials. He hastened to add that I was with him causing them, I suppose, to assume that I was also foreign. Therefore they left me alone. The fact that the reporter came from a Jewish background encouraged the soldiers to open up and talk comfortably with him on a range of subjects even including the *Galil* submachine guns which they were carrying. In order to please the foreign journalist further the soldiers prepared for him to take pictures of them 'at work'.

There were not many pedestrians walking near the soldiers at that time. But, luckily for my friend, a Hebron resident walked by. The soldiers grabbed the man who appeared to be in his late 30s and ordered him to stand with his hands on the wall and his feet spread. The soldiers turned to the foreign journalist and told him to take all the pictures he needed.

Then the soldiers decided to 'work' on passing cars as well. They ordered the driver of one car with Hebron licence plates to pull over. They ordered the driver and the passenger next to him out of the car. Both were told to stand on one side of the car, with their legs spread and their hands on top. The men did as they were told allowing my friend to take all the pictures he wished.

My friend managed to get several good shots after which we prepared to take our leave of the soldiers. Just as we were leaving, I noticed one of the soldiers point his finger at a young man walking in a crowd more than 50 metres away. It would have been very easy for the young man not to have noticed the soldier or at least to have thought the soldier was pointing at something or someone else. If that had happened, past experience has proved that the soldier most probably would have fired at the young man later claiming that the youth had refused to stop when ordered to do so. Fortunately, the young man saw the soldier and walked towards him. He was then searched, as well as being yelled and cursed at like the rest.

My foreign friend then decided he wanted to interview Jewish settlers inside the old city who live within fortified compounds protected by soldiers and barbed wire. I let him go alone and instead decided to walk around the city observing for myself army behaviour. I noticed the soldiers, who walked in groups of four, stopping and conducting searches on whoever

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AL FAJR invites our readers to contribute letters, articles and opinions. Contributions must be signed, but names may be withheld upon request.

Arab Weakness True Cause of Israeli Air Raid

by Said al-Ghazali

The raid by Israeli war planes on the PLO headquarters in Tunisia may prompt many observers to go back and review a complex series of recent events which have occupied the news headlines and broadcasts of late.

Arab weakness can be seen in the recent events which have uncovered the Arab policies which have put a lot of the Arab countries under the western thumb. The Arab regimes' interests have finally become so identical with those of the western countries. So, the Arab rulers now consider the Palestinian revolution a real threat and have begun blocking its way to progress. The Arabs thus divided have not devised a concrete strategy for peace and war, but instead have spent their time and resources in internal fighting giving Israel and the United States time to work out their joint strategy and tactic.

Unable to move themselves out of the Arab morass, the Palestinians and the PLO factions have become themselves reflective of Arab internal differences, while at the same time they are still considered the enemies of the Arab rulers. It is time now, particularly after the raid, to sound the revolution's siren for all Palestinian factions to evaluate what happened and to discuss strategy for the future of the revolution.

Arab Weakness

It is not superior Israeli courage or its indestructible air force which enabled Israel to strike at the PLO headquarters in Tunisia October 1. It is instead Arab weakness which also enabled Israel to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 and to wage a full-scale invasion against Palestinians in Lebanon in 1982.

It is this Arab weakness and US support for Israel that prompted Israel to ignore the UN resolutions and the unanymous international approval for convening an international conference on the Palestinian cause.

All the 'positive steps' and the concessions the Palestinians have offered have met with deaf ears from the US and Israel. The Arabs took a weak stance and maintained rhetoric of justice and peace and only begged the US and Europe to help establish peace in the area. They are shackled by their own fetters of weakness and remain unable to initiate an action or make an effective proper reaction.

In 1965 the Arab failure and helpless state prompted the Palestinians to form their own armed revolution and to protest practically against the atmosphere of defeatism. The Israelis as well as the Americans and the Arabs did not want this revolution to be successful. Thus they plotted the massacres in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The Palestinian revolution was forbidden access from the borders in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. However, the revolution scored a lot of political points in the Arab and international arenas. The Palestinian and Arab masses backed the revolution and now the revolution represents all Palestinians.

The Arab countries as well as the US and Israel did not like the idea of PLO representation and continued to plot against the revolution. In Lebanon, in 1982 all Arab countries including Syria, Libya, Jordan and Egypt watched the slaughter of the revolution. They were happy and condemned the Israeli invasion only to deceive their masses. After the invasion, victory banners were seen in many Arab capitals.

It was not sufficient however for the American, Israeli and Arab rulers to kick the PLO out of Lebanon. Instead they created splits in it. The crippled PLO went to Tunisia, Yemen, Algeria, Amman, Baghdad and Damascus. There is now no avenue to Palestine but through the treacherous sea.

The reaction of the Arabs after the recent Israeli raid has not been more than condemnation. This Arab response has encouraged the US to call the raid "self-defence" and the Israelis to vow to carry out more raids against the Palestinians.

The White House statement issued in response to the Israeli aerial raid considered the raid 'retaliation against terrorist attacks. It is a legitimate response and an expression of self-defence."

The incredible Arab inaction continued and Israel used the episode of Larnaca to strike at the PLO just as Israel used the shooting of the Israeli ambassador in London in 1982 to justify its invasion of Lebanon.

Similarly Israel is able to justify its brutal bombardment of the defenceless Palestinian refugee camps.

Israel hit the PLO to score more political concessions from the Arabs. The raid is a message to Jordan and Egypt enticing them to abandon the PLO and to kick it off of the political platform. This is the political theme of the raid.

The raid is also an embarrassment for Arab moderates and radicals and an act of disdain for all the Arab world. Arabs and the PLO have offered many concessions to the US but have harvested a raid on Tunisia, a moderate Arab country which offers shelter for the moderate PLO leadership which showed readiness to recognise and even negotiate with Israel regardless of the political risks and sharp criticism of the PLO from other Palestinian factions.

After the raid, the Arab radical rulers condemned Israel, the US, the Arab reactionary camp and the moderate Palestinian leadership but they acted oppositely. They secretly cooperated and plotted with Israel and the US, then harassed their own national citizens. On the contrary, the Arab moderate rulers repeatedly expressed their good faith and their serious intention to put an end to the Palestinian cause and reach a "durable peace in the area." Thus they wore the gowns of peace and made their trips of pilgrimage to Washington. The Pope Ronald Reagan asked them to show their faith in Israel and denounce the PLO and the presence of Palestinians in the word. He argued that all Palestinians including their leadership are terrorists. And the Arab moderates cannot prove the opposite. It is made clear to them that Israel does not trust any Palestinian regardless of his or her political stand and that Palestinianism is taboo. It violates the sacred codes of the occupation. Palestinians must be destroyed like cockroaches. The Arab countries must disarm Palestinians and kick them out of their territory or the Israeli long arm will strike.

This is exactly what the Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin said

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'Last Chance for Peace' Means Surrender, Not War

by Khalil Touma

Listening to some of the Arab leaders declaring feverishly that the present political moves are the "last chance for peace in the Middle East," one may very well think that this could really be a last warning before a war is waged against Israel.

However one soon discovers that instead of a warning before war, it is a warning before capitulation. One discovers that additional Arab principles are being departed from by these leaders and that they have crawled nearer to a total surrender. Meanwhile, lessons of the bitter experience over the long years of occupation are not being learned or absorbed by the leadership.

Israel's air attack on the headquarters of the PLO in Tunisia which received America's blessing is just a flagrant example. Arabs everywhere and Palestinians in particular are not in need of additional proof that the consecutive US administrations have always chosen to be on the side of our enemies. The Americans have made this "choice" because of their imperialist interests in the region and the world over. So naturally they support all enemies of any national liberation movement.

It is not logical to look for US recognition of Palestinian rights while in Central and Latin America it slaughters democracy and the human rights of the indigenous peoples through the US stooges — the military dictators. It also doesn't make sense to say the US cares about peace in the Middle East while endangering world peace by the star war programme and the like. Any attempt to convince the US administration to comply with the standards of human morality is doomed to failure. The sole language understood by this administration is that of force and revolution, a language it comprehended very well in Vietnam.

The Arab leaders are well acquainted with the nature of US political strategy. Any casual listener to the Arab media can see that instead of taking the necessary measures to hinder and foil the imperialistic plans, these Arab "notables" go all the way to meet the orders and wishes of the US, begging to get something but to no avail. The Israeli attack on Tunisia which was immediately supported and exonerated by the US showed that the only thing that will please both Israel and the US is to put the Palestinian rights and people in a coffin once and for all.

Peace appeals by Arab officials, who are unarmed with either military might or determination, are translated correctly by the US and Israel. Their message is the readiness of these leaders to comply with American conditions. These leaders have long seen as most essential US recognition of the PLO and an agreement to talk to it. This is a correct stance but it should not be achieved by ceding the rights of the Palestinian people.

What else will the Palestinians be able to do other than to stand and fight US policy which aims at stripping them of everything, even the legitimacy of the PLO as their sole representative, a thing which has already been recognised by the highest international body — the UN — which offered the PLO an observer status.

The recent moves prove, however, that at least the Jordanians are ready at present to go all the way to a new Camp David. They are ready to meet American and Israeli conditions. In fact, they have already done so. The international conference long sought by the Amman agreement is whittled away now to an "appropriate international framework" to deal with the problem of the Security Council Resolution 242, which also has been denied and rejected by the Palestinians. Last but not least the state of war with Israel is declared ended by the Jordanians according to reports during the visit of King Hussein to Washington.

This and other things indicate that all conditions imposed by the US and Israel are well under way to be implemented. This is exactly the Arab regime's way of facing the American and Israeli threats. And this surrender is the essence of the Arab warning about "the last chance for peace in the region."

As a result of all these developments, the Palestinians in the occupied territories are facing a prism where the official leadership of the PLO are demanded to differentiate between black and white. So far, unfortunately, this leadership has not stated clearly its position on the recent developments, and in particular the Jordanian political moves. Does the PLO leadership support direct negotiations and ending the state of war with Israel? Whether yes or no, the people demand to know the answer. Indeed an assessment and review of the present situation and continuing developments are needed very badly. ■

Khalil Touma is a member of Al Fajr's *editorial staff.*

Abu Ghosh Residents Insist on Arab Identity

by Baher Ashhab

Thirteen kilometres inside the 'green line' west of Jerusalem lies a Palestinian village unlike any other village in Palestine. It is dubbed the "model of cooperation and integration" by Israeli officials, yet Palestinians see it as an embarrassing and freak spot in their history. They call it the "village of treason" and often choose to ignore its presence altogether.

Village residents on the other hand, especially the younger generation, are tired of such stereotyping and have recently begun a stringent campaign of self-evaluation which seems so far to have resulted in a demand to return to the Palestinian camp.

This village is Abu Ghosh (pop. 4000), the only surviving Arab village within miles of the 'green line' outside Jerusalem. The village recently became the focus of attention after it was reported in the Hebrew press that Abu Ghosh youth were eager to enlist in the Israeli army. "I believe that three years of military service means hope for the future," a 24-year old Abu Ghosh resident was quoted as saying in *The Jerusalem Post* September 27. Another resident was quoted in the same article as saying that while "serving on the front lines would be hard for us, we can serve in other ways; as builders for the army, as drivers. National service is more appropriate for us."

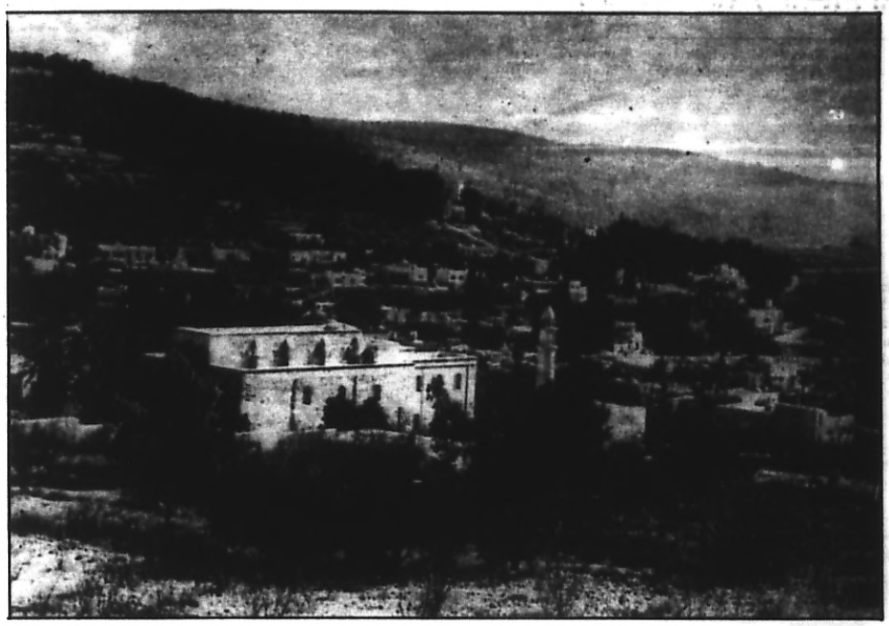
The *Post* report followed another that made public an incident last month when the Israeli military posted a draft notice in the village calling upon all those born in 1968/69 to enlist. The military later retracted calling the incident "a mistake." Abu Ghosh youth were then "severely disappointed that they would not be given the chance to serve in the army of Israel which they feel most loyal to," the Hebrew press reported.

What went wrong in Abu Ghosh to make young Palestinians want to fight alongside the Israeli army? The answer lies some 35 years in the past.

Shameful Past

"We were loyal to Turkish rule, then to the British administration and now we are loyal to the Israeli state. We will maintain this attitude when Israel goes and something else comes in its place," said Haj Musa Abu Ghosh, the village *mukhtar*, a man very vocal about his close ties to Israeli officials and settlers. Haj Mousa, according to a village elder, participated in 1947 in a joint Zionist-Arab team that helped

Haj Musa Abu Ghosh, the village *mukhtar*, sits next to the village well.



Abu Ghosh, inside the 'green line' west of Jerusalem

Geula Cohen, then a member of an underground terrorist group, to escape from a Jerusalem jail where she was being held by the British. Cohen is now a member of Knesset and considered one of the most anti-Arab members of the Israeli administration.

According to the same elder, Musa's house was a regular hideout for Jewish terrorists prior to the 1948 war. "These incidents are what muddied the reputation of our village," said the elder, who did not wish to be identified.

The *mukhtar's* family enjoyed the lucrative position of being the largest landowners in the area, according to village residents. They owned over 10,000 dunums, giving them enough wealth to remain in authority. Much of the *mukhtar's* land was sold to Israeli settlers, according to the *mukhtar*, but he remained in power because of his age and influence within his own family, the largest of five main families in Abu Ghosh.

"Most residents wish they could dissociate their village from Haj Musa and his 'body guards', but they are afraid to say so. Haj Musa is not unlike most bureaucrats in a colonised society, because he is backed and protected by the coloniser," said an ex-resident of Abu Ghosh, who says he left the village after after being harassed by Haj Musa.

A close relative of Haj Musa, a 75-year-old man who identified himself as Abu Yusef, reiterated Haj Musa's rationale for Abu Ghosh. "We befriended every government that passed by us, and will continue to do so," he said. "So what if they are Turkish, English or Jews? Look what happened to those who opposed them."

Haj Musa, however, has been accused of going further than merely befriending foreign powers. He has advocated the total integration of his people into the foreign society, say critics. "We want our children to have Israeli education," he was quoted as saying in a *Post* article four years ago. "Our children are Israeli and we want them to learn about Jewish history," he said.

Asked if he denies his Arabic and Muslim background, Haj Musa said: "Not at all. I am an Arab and a Muslim, but so what. I only live once and I'd rather live comfortably the way I am, than be a fool and resist the *status quo*."

Becoming 'Arab' Again

"We, the residents of Abu Ghosh, deplore the cheap attempts by Israeli policy makers and their media to disband us of our ties with our Palestinian people. We see it as a filthy campaign to alienate us further and create destructive divisions among this struggling population. While we implore upon our people not to fall into such a trap we reiterate our deep commitment to the cause and our unyielding participation in the destiny of the Arab nation." This written statement was delivered to *Al Fajr* October 1, along with a longer, more detailed statement carrying the signatures of over 70 persons. It is part of the people of Abu Ghosh's response to claims of their wish to be counted as Israeli.

"The people whose names appeared in the Hebrew press in favour of integration into Israeli society or joining its army are but derelict drug users and ex-convicts who saw in the army an acceptable purpose in life," the statement said. "Our village is ruled by a group of corrupt individuals who see in our alienation from the Arab world a chance at gaining personal authority and material reward. They have been the cause of our miserable disillusionment and loss of identity. It is our desire to be reunited with our big Arab family," they said. But really, how Arab is this 'Arab' village?

Kol Ha'ir, a Hebrew daily, described the village on October 9, 1981, as "the most Israeli of any Arab village inside the 'green line.'" However, on examination this does not prove to be true. There are only two signs of Israeli culture as you leave the 'very Israeli' Jerusalem to Tel Aviv highway and disappear into the hills for a few minutes towards the village. First there stands an Israeli police station. Secondly there is a modern cafe which, incidentally, is owned by the village *mukhtar*.

Abu Ghosh is not Israeli, but instead as Israeli Arab as can be. Its narrow, irregularly paved roads are gutted by running laundry water and open sewage. Its old flat-roofed houses indicate the age of the site and the lack of progress. The traditional Palestinian garment wore by men and women in the village indicates to what group of people they feel they belong. The village has no parks, no youth clubs, no libraries, no playgrounds, yet high above on the surrounding mountain tops stand several ultra-modern Israeli settlements much like those currently being built or already existing on hundreds of mountain tops in the occupied territories and inside the 'green line'. Children still play in the mud, and the sound of the call for prayer still fills the air five times a day.

"When Kahane came to our village to campaign for votes in the last Knesset elections a year ago, he told us that when he became prime minister, he would make sure we were expelled from *Eretz Israel* in luxury trucks rather than on foot like he had in mind for the rest of the Arabs. He said that this was our reward because some of our elders helped Zionist fighters escape British

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Gaza Series IV :

Gazan Labour Increasingly Unproductive : Faces Fewer Jobs, Lower Wages

Gaza workers line up outside an Israeli car. Though all are looking for work only a few will be lucky enough to find it.

by Awad Abdel Fattah

Fayez Abu 'Un wakes up every morning at 4:00 am. He leaves his home in a Gaza refugee camp by 5:00 am in order to catch 5:30 am transportation out of the Strip to Tel Aviv where he hopes to be before 7:00. Abu 'Un does not know whether he will be lucky and be picked up by a Jewish contractor, yet he chooses to get up so early and to travel far just to sit and wait at the Tel Aviv-Asqalan junction. We can say he chooses, but Abu 'Un really has no other choice.

If he does not find day work early, the chances are other possibilities await him. He may sit under the hot sun until noon and finally be forced to return home empty-handed. Yet a worse fate could befall him. He could be chased by the police and brought to court and fined. Or he could be taken by borderguards to an isolated place and beaten mercilessly. Abu 'Un's crime is not burglary or aggravated assault, but seeking work to feed his poor, 9-member family. Abu 'Un, 25, who lives in the Jabalya refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip, has been looking for work this way for the last two years, and prospects for a better life look grim.

Abu 'Un is not alone in his search for day work. Waiting at road junctions close to Israeli towns and factories, hundreds of Palestinian workers, particularly from the Gaza Strip, are seen every morning. This is a phenomenon which developed under Israeli occupation in which so many of the Palestinian workers were turned into cheap daily labourers.

"To wait there is not an easy task," said Ziad Ashor, a refugee with a wife and three children "It is a very humiliating thing to look for work in this way," he added.

Looking for Work

The day begins for daily labourers as early as possible in the morning. Competing and racing to be the first at the conjunction is part of the struggle for survival. Still those who have strong muscles and bigger frames are often the luckier. "The Jewish contractors choose workers as if they are dealing with animals," said Abu 'Un.

Workers stand in groups beside the street and when a car approaches, possibly to pick up one or two workers, tens of workers rush to the car, pushing and pulling each other. Sometimes they rush to a car which stops only to drop off somebody or for some other reason. The driver often responds in anger to the rush of workers and may curse Arabs in general. "This," said Abu 'Un, "reflects how needy we are and how miserable our economic condition is... If we don't do this we and our families will go hungry."

Hundreds of Palestinian labourers from Gaza go through this every day. If they work that day, they can buy a healthy meal for the family, if not the family eats whatever they can find. More than half the Gazan workers wait long hours, with no work and finally go back home empty-handed. Some lie and say they worked that day, so that they can avoid being laughed at by others. The worst thing for many is that not only did they not bring money home that day but they lost money in transportation.

Local unionists in the Gaza Strip estimate that 20 percent of the 70,000-strong labour force are unemployed. As many from this 20 percent as possible go every day like Abu 'Un to find work. These workers have no protection. They can be humiliated by police or beaten up by borderguards and no one stands ready to defend them.

These workers are not registered with the Israeli Employment Bureau, which means according to Israeli law that they are illegal labourers. One of the workers told *Al Fajr:* "We go to the Employment Bureau and they tell us there is no work. So what can we do? We can't sit at home unemployed."

These workers say they are forced to look for work regardless of reported acts of humiliation and harassment by Israeli police and borderguards. Whoever is caught by the police soliciting day labour is brought to court and fined. If he is caught a second time, he may face one month imprisonment. Ziad Ashor said that five of his friends were fined in February of this year to IS15,000 (US 10 dollars) each. Some workers must report daily to the military government headquarters for a period of time because they are caught more than once working or even looking for work inside Israel without a permit. Marwan al-Najar, 23, from Jabalya camp works in Tel Aviv. He said that his 53-year-old father was made to report to the military governor for thirty days straight in 1982 because he had tried to work in Israel.

Borderguard Harassment

Another serious problem faced by Palestinian workers — whether those 50 percent of Gazan labourers who are registered in Israel as legal or those 20 percent who are not — is the aggressive attitude of the borderguards. This problem has been given some attention by a liberal Israeli magazine, *HaOlam Hazeh.* In 1984, the magazine published an article in which two workers explained how they were mercilessly beaten by borderguards. There has been no pursuit of this issue, however, although workers say hardly a day passes without a similar incident.

Marwan al-Najar, who works in an Israeli chocolate factory, told *Al Fajr* he was beaten five times by police and borderguards in Tel Aviv. He has been working there the last seven years with a permit from the Israeli Gaza-based employment office. But Israeli law does not allow workers from the occupied territories to stay overnight in Israel, thus all workers sleeping inside Israel are in "defiance of the law."

Yet many are forced to stay, finding shelter as best they can, because they cannot afford the daily transportation costs to and from the Strip. Others work such long hours there is no time to go back and forth. When a worker is caught sleeping in his place of work or in the hallways of various boarding houses in Tel Aviv, he is 'punished' either by a beating by borderguards or a fine by the court. Jewish employers rarely interfere in such cases, many seemingly indifferent. Marwan al-Najar sports a scar on the side of his mouth caused by a beating by Israeli police when he was found sleeping inside Israel. "The workers who have regular work are forced to stay in their place of employment because of the long distance and the transportation expenses," he said. "If I happen to be late or absent from work because of a curfew or search at checkpoints, I will have the risk of losing my job or be humiliated by the factory's owner." he added.

Last February Marwan was apprehended by a number of policemen at night in Tel Aviv when he was going out to buy food. They took him to an isolated spot where they interrogated him as to if he sleeps in Tel Aviv and where his friends stayed. "I refused to tell them where my friends sleep," he said, "because if I tell them, they will be brought to court and given heavy fines, if not imprisonment." He told *Al Fajr* "For two hours they beat me on all parts of my body, causing a deep scar on my face. When I became very weak and almost fainted, they left me." Al-Najar said he went to the police to lodge a complaint but they refused to hear him out and accused him of lying. He was finally forced to go alone to the hospital where he was treated for two days at his own expense. "You can inmagine how that hurt me," he said, "When you know that the costs of two day's treatment in a hospital is equal to 70 percent of my salary."

Unions Are a Threat

Workers say organising themselves to avoid exploitation and other harassment is very difficult. They say Jewish employers are afraid of union leaders raising the consciousness of workers. They charge that the employers automatically fire any worker who may try to speak on behalf of the workers for better working conditions. Said Musa Naji, 45, must support an 8-member family. He was fired last year from his job in an Israeli ice cream factory after three-and-a-half years. He was given no compensation. Naji says he was accused of political incitement among the Palestinian workers. "Simply put," he said, "I had the courage to take the initiative to ask the employer for the improvement of working conditions and a raise in wages."

Ayesh Ibrahim, an activist in the Progressive Working Bloc Union, was also fired from work in a chicken slaughter house in 1982 because he organised the workers to demand improvements in the working conditions. He told *Al Fajr* the working conditions in the factory where 200 out of 300 workers were Palestinians were terrible. "The Palestinian workers were put in the dangerous positions and were assigned to dirty work such as carrying things and cleaning the factory," he said. Ibrahim said most of the work accidents occurred among the Palestinian workers. Four Palestinian workers from the Gaza Strip had their fingers cut off by the electric slaughtering blade during his period of work and they still received no compensation. A team from the Israeli National Insurance Institution has not yet completed its investigation although three years have passed since the incidents.

Another worker, Said, an ex-political prisoner, had two of his fingers cut off during his work in construction. His Jewish employer refused to recognise the incident as a work-related accident, until Said resorted to the courts. Yet his case is not finished. According to Said, many workers who don't know Israeli labour law don't pursue their cases when they are injured during work.

Workers in the Gaza Strip also complain about poor job security and the continued drop in wages. They say that exploitation by employers has been increasing in the last two years and that workers are often fired for the silliest reasons. Also those unemployed don't receive unemployment benefits from the Israeli Employment Bureau, as Israeli workers do.

Wages, said Ibrahim, have dropped by as much as 50 percent. Al-Najar told *Al Fajr* his salary was equal to JD100 until two years ago, but now is only JD50, partly due to increasing inflation.

In a study by the Israeli Histadrut union four years ago in 1981 comparing wages of Palestinian labourers to Israeli workers, Israelis received about 19 shekels per hour while the Palestinians received 12. Today the Palestinian workers may make as much as IS1000 per hour which is equivalent to 60 cents in American currency.

Before 1967, more than half of the people in the Gaza Strip worked mostly in agriculture and fishing. Others worked outside the homeland, in the Arab world. According to Sai brahim, about 1000 workers, who were the breadwinners for some 10,000 persons, worked in the offices and camps of the international forces stationed in the area to separate Israeli and Egyptian forces before 1967. They worked as drivers, cleaners and cooks. Some workers found employment in the few local shops which existed in the city of Gaza.

A few years after the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, the traditional socio-economic structure of Palestinian society was destroyed. Restrictions imposed by the Israelis on Palestinian farmers like limiting the water supply and restricting the markets, drove more and more people to the Israeli labour scene. Also, the borders with Egypt were closed off to many workers and students who used to work and study there.

Local Gazan Work

Presently some 30 percent of Gaza's labour force work in new local factories or textile [illegible] sweatshops. After 1967 [illegible] there was an improvement in the position of the local middle class in the Gaza Strip. The number of sweatshops and factories doubled during the period of occupation. "But this improvement has been taking place at the expense of the workers," said one of the veteran unionists. Wages are even less than those given to Palestinian workers in Israel. "The average daily wage is IS5000 (US 3.3 dollars)," said the unionist.

In fishing there are 3900 fishermen working to support about 35,000 people. But the restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on fishing and harassment by the Israeli coastguard have caused a considerable drop in the number of fish caught. Israel has restricted the fishing area from 45 to 27 km. The fishing boats are also held for days and their owners fined under the pretext that they entered the forbidden area.

In addition, heavy taxes totalling 42 percent of the monthly income are levied on fishermen. A field survey indicates that fish production dropped from 1218 tons in 1981 to 798 tons.

There are more than 250 textile sweatshops distributed all over the Gaza Strip and in the refugee camps. Raw materials are brought from Israel to the shops where the final work is done. The number of workers in each sweatshop ranges from eight to 20. Workers (male and female) work an average of 11 hours a day for a low wage not exceeding IS6000 (US 4 dollars).

There are more than 50 garages and bodyshops on both sides of the street at the entrance to Gaza City. Most of the workers in these garages are teenagers ranging between the ages of 14 to 16. Each garage employs four to six workers who work about 12 hours a day.

Unions: A Long Absence

Historically the Gaza Strip was not among the primary targets of unionist work in Palestine. This can be attributed to the agricultural nature of the area and the lack of industrial development. Therefore, contrary to other parts of Palestine, unions in the Gaza Strip were first established through a governmental decree (then the Egyptian government) and not as the result of a workers' struggle.

Therefore, those who [illegible] were appointed as [illegible] heads of the unions by the Egyptian government did not come from the working class. Many of those appointed before 1967 still hold the same position. Local Abu Musa, 50 who did time off and on over a 10 year period for political charges, said these 'unionists', some of whom have died, have become businessmen and no longer represent the real interests of the workers. "The opposite is true," he said. "They are the enemies of the workers."

Over the last 17 years of occupation unionist work has been paralysed. Consequently the workers have been suffering a great deal without someone to defend them. Only individual initiatives have taken place in a few locales to protect the interests of the workers. But these were not successful in the absence of strong unions and because of Israeli opposition.

Gazan unionists attribute the long paralysis of unionist work under occupation to a number of reasons. Most important, they say, is the atrocity which Israel committted in the Gaza Strip in 1969-1970 to crush the armed resistance, which constituted a real challenge to the Israeli army at the time." Said Ibrahim said the armed resistance was at the expense of organised political work. "Therefore," he said, "even after the Israelis succeeded in silencing the armed resistance, political work is still a great risk." He said that whoever raised his voice was immediately thrown in prison with horrible torture. This, of course, frightened people and prevented them from joining political or unionist forces.

This situation lasted until 1980 when a group of enlightened workers and former political prisoners decided to revive the unions. They turned to the head of the paralysed General Workers' Union in Gaza, Abdel Rahman Darabeh, to pave the way for the union. Many Gazan labourers say, however, that they do not trust Darabeh.

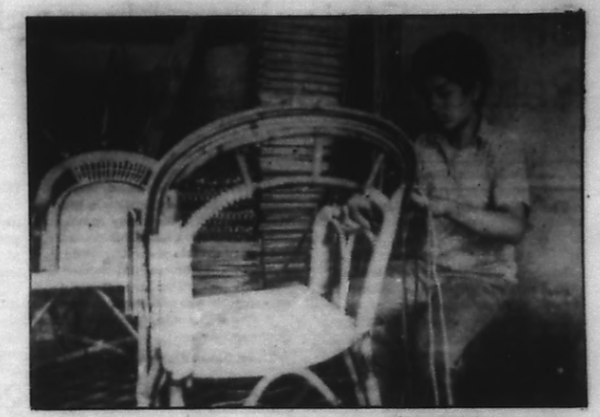
Darabeh reportedly asked for a permit from Israel whose consent was conditional upon [illegible] two things: not to accept new members and not to organise any elections. The unionists only found out about the secret agreement between Darabeh and Israel when hundreds of workers' applications for membership piled up without approval.

Three months ago some of the same unionists felt the time was [illegible] ripe to try to reorganise again. They [illegible] resume their ranks. [illegible] secured the traditional leadership of the union into opening a union centre.

But this, they say, is only the beginning. They need time. Said Ibrahim said they will not retreat in their battle to defend Gazan workers. ■

30 Percent of Gaza's Labour Force Work 11 Hours A Day In Gazan Sweatshops For IS6000 ($4) per Day

A Gazan worker 'illegally' sleeping in the backroom of his place of employment.



A Gaza youth winds the strands of coloured plastic around a bamboo chair. Wicker furniture is a famous Gazan industry.

ISRAELI SCENE

Striking Ethiopians Unmask Religious Establishment

by Michael Lowry

Third World Jews in the Jewish State

Throughout September 1985, hundreds of Ethiopian Jews held a sit-down strike opposite the Jerusalem Great Synagogue in protest of the Chief Rabbinate's ruling that all Ethiopian marriage candidates must undergo conversion ceremonies (consisting of ritual immersion) before they are wed. Since arriving in Israel *en masse* last year, the Ethiopians have been engaged in a running battle with the rabbinate over their status as Jews.

The conflict stems from the differences between the religious practices of the Ethiopian community and those of Jewish orthodoxy. The Ethiopians believe in the Torah and meticulously observe the Sabbath and Jewish dietary laws. But the Talmud, the Jewish legal system that developed during the first millenium CE, seems never to have reached them because of their geographic isolation.

The pivotal point of the conflict has been marriage. The rabbinate has refused to marry Ethiopian couples unless they undergo conversion ceremonies — a step deemed necessary by the rabbinate if its doubts about the "Jewishness" of the Ethiopians are to be put to rest. The institution of civil marriage does not exist in Israel and the Ethiopian Jews, along with the majority secular population, are at the mercy of the rabbinate in regard to all manners pertaining to marriage and divorce.

The strikers, insulted by the rabbinate's verbal doubts in regard to their status as Jews, vowed to remain at the site until the ruling had been overturned. Motivated by a kind of instinctual contempt for the rabbinate, a large sector of the secular public rallied to the Ethiopians' support. But to little avail: the rabbinate dug its heels in the ground, quoted *Halacha* (Jewish religious law) and refused to be swayed by anything so temporal as public opinion.

Religious Coercion: A Living Faith

Religious coercion is a living faith in Israel, one legislated into the law of the land. From the compulsory observance of the Sabbath and religious holidays to the authority of the rabbinical court, the *status quo* between the secular and religious populations clearly discriminates against the former. The refusal of the ostensibly secular Zionist establishment to institute civil marriage and divorce in Israel and its acquiescence to the orthodox establishment cannot be explained away simply on the basis of coalition politics. For at root, the [illegible] features of *Halacha* apartheid-like [illegible] and fit in well with the xenophobia and national exclusiveness that dominate the mindset of the Israeli power elite.

Being a Jew in Israel (or a white in South Africa) is not a matter of self-definition; it is first and foremost the means used by the state for regulating the population and insuring the continued maintenance of Jewish domination in the state of Israel. It is not by chance that the orthodox establishment has been given the role of deciding "Who is a Jew." The obscurantist notions of purity and pollution in *Halacha* are extremely well suited to this end.

But let us now return to the Ethiopian strikers.

"Our Colour Won't Wash Off"

As the month wore on and the demonstrators showed no sign of capitulating to the rabbinate, the religious establishment grew more and more incensed with the stubborness of the Ethiopians. *Ha'mahaneh Ha'haredi*, the organ of the ultra-orthodox camp, ran an editorial on September 26 under the title, "Blacks to Africa." The Ethiopians, the paper opined, should be given a clear ultimatum: either undergo conversion or be "shipped back to Africa."

On the other side of the religious spectrum, the supposedly moderate National Religious Party threatened to walk out of the national unity government if the government in any way interfered with the decisions of the rabbinate. NRP MK Avner Sciaky sanctimoniously declared that "all those who speak so fervently about religious coercion should realise that what the Ethiopians are out to do is to coerce the rabbinate and the Jewish people" (Israel Radio, September 18, 1985).

Meanwhile, the mainstream Zionist establishment was becoming increasingly embarrassed by the whole affair. Camped out in downtoun West Jerusalem, the strikers were not doing "Israel's image abroad" any good. One of the objectives of "Operation Moses" — the airlift that brought thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel during the final months of 1984 — was to "absolutely refute the cruel and incorrect assumption that Zionism equals racism" (in the words of Foreign Ministry official Moshe Gilboa, quoted in the *New York Times*, January 4, 1985).

However, in September 1985, this claim — inane as it may be in the context of Israeli-Palestinian relations — was proving difficult to sustain. One of the placards at the strike site read: "Our colour won't wash off" — an obvious allusion to the racial prejudice the demonstrators felt was responsible for the rabbinate's obdurate refusal to recognise them as Jews.

The Public Response

With negotiations between the strike leaders and the rabbinate at a deadlock, the strike seemed to be on the way to becoming a permanent fixture of West Jerusalem. The strike site itself, comprising a few ramshackle lean-tos and a large canopy [illegible] over a small city square, had a spread [illegible] sphere to it distinctive African atmosp[illegible] and stood in sharp contrast to the ostentacious building that houses the Chief Rabbinate on the other side of the street.

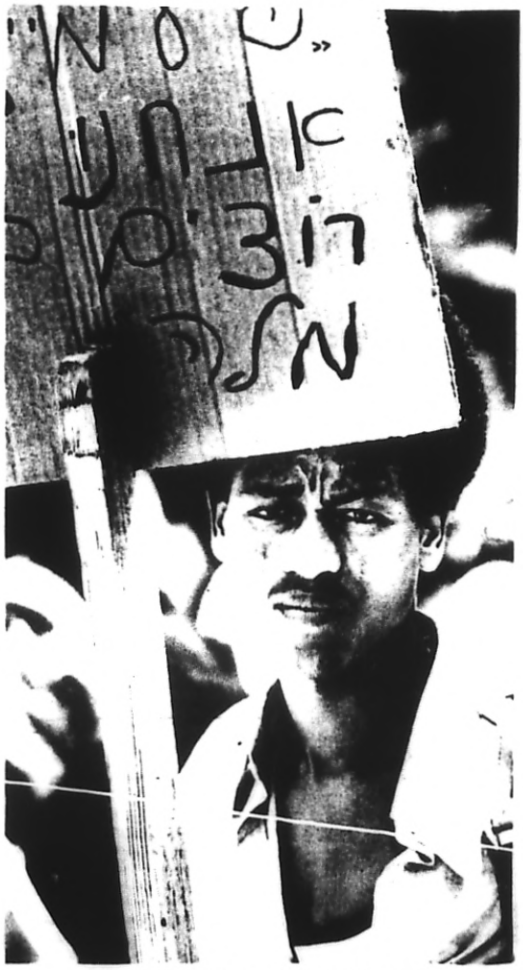
The presence of hundreds of Ethiopian Jews in the middle of the city evoked both sympathy and anger from the local population. Secular young people, attracted by the sense of kinship, of togetherness of the strikers, began to flock to the site to express their solidarity with the Ethiopians and their cause. At the same time, while the older members of the Ethiopian community appreciated the support they were receiving from the secular youth, they also feared that they were undermining the religious faith of their own young people with their anti-religious views.

For the worshippers at the Great Synagogue, the majority of whom are members of good standing of the religious bourgeoisie of Jerusalem, the presence of the hundreds of Black Jews across the road from the rabbinate was nothing short of scandalous. On their way to High Holiday services, dressed to the hilt, the ramshackle encampment of the strikers could not but act as a rebuke to their hypocrisy. Some of them tried to ignore the strike; others were so incensed by it that they walked across the street and began berating the Ethiopians. "After everything we've done for you," they yelled, "rather than be thankful, you start misbehaving!"

The Great Conciliator Saves the Day

As the strike entered its second month, and still with no end in sight, Prime Minister Peres, the Great Conciliator, stepped in to negotiate a compromise solution. In exchange for the rabbinate's agreement to drop its demand that *all* Ethiopian marriage candidates undergo conversion ceremonies, the demonstrators agreed to the establishment of a special review board (composed of rabbinate officials and Ethiopian religious leaders) that will check the "Jewishness' of marriage applicants on an individual basis.

Although the strike thus came to an end, it is doubtful the conflict will end here. Both the rabbinate's practice of reneging on agreements with the Ethiopians and recent statements issuing from the rabbinate to the effect that every member of the Ethiopian community is a "problem" in his/her own right, foretell that the Ethiopians will have to renew their struggle before long. ■



[illegible] protests outside Jerusalem's Great Synagogue.
An Ethiopian Jew [illegible]

The Flood

A Short Story
by Khalil Touma

Noah, knowing the flood was approaching, built his ark and filled it with all kinds of food, drink, girls and musicians. With the very first drop of rain he opened the door of the ark, bowed ceremoniously, stepped over the threshold and shut the door behind him, still laughing at his dear friend Sultan who had refused to join him in spite of all Noah's insistence. The echo of Sultan's words still rang in his ears like the beat of a drum coming from a far distance — "I prefer to stay with the others. I have no life away from them and the fields are desperately in need of tilling."

Noah, tall and stout like the huge trunk of an old tree, wore a long garment which he smoothed every now and then over his swollen stomach with his right palm. He walked around inspecting the chambers of food, drink, girls and musicians.

After he was sure that everything was in order, he retired to his private chamber. Then Noah opened the shutter and looked at the world outside. A smile came over his face as he saw the heavy rains drenching the earth. The water already covered the ground to a height of two or three handspans. Nothing could be seen but water on the earth and water in the sky. Everywhere forming streams and lakes. Cries of sheep and birds and people shouting at one another could be heard.

Noah closed the shutter and sat back on his goatskin, spread for him on the floor. It was rather cold, so he ordered a fire to be built. Immediately two girls brought forth a hearth full of glistening fire and placed it in front of him. "My arms and feet ache. I need someone to rub them," said Noah. Immediately the two girls began to massage his limbs. Not much time passed before the room was very warm. One of the girls looked out the window and discovered that darkness had fallen upon the earth.

Noah said, "Now we must begin the festivities. Bring the musicians, bring the wine." In seconds the music began, and the slaves brought in jars full of wine. It was warm, very warm and dry inside. Yet cold wind, cold wetness prevailed outside. Noah and the girls drank and danced and had fun all night long. Nothing could spoil the beautiful evening in the ark. The shouts and screams outside were only a faint murmur within the thick oaken walls of the ark.

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Sultan — feeling the great responsibility upon him of his children, grandchildren and the whole village including the cattle, birds, trees and fields — called for a meeting of the entire village. Soon the public square was full of people standing amidst the fields drenched in the great rain. Everyone was talking at once:

Danger is all around.
We must do something.
We must protect our children.
We must protect our goods.
Let us move to another village.
Let us pray.
No one can stay here alive.

Sultan looked far above the others at the top of the highest mountain at the far end of the fields. Then he said, "Let us go there, right to the very top, and one day we will come down again to these beloved fields. Women must care for the children. Men, you must cut as much wood as you can. We must transport all we can of our belongings on our mules and donkeys. I will help the old and sick, taking care of them on the way up the mountain. We must defeat all obstacles. We must stand united. Water will not reach the top of the mountain and if if does, we will have our boats ready. Let us store food and what goods we cannot carry in the fortified graves of our grandfathers. Let us work together, all stonecutters and builders. We must build solid houses, strong enough so that all the waters of the heavens will not be able to knock them down. We must build boats enough for all of us, strong and large for the disastrous times that may lie ahead. Rain should not stop the beating of our hearts."

The entire village moved in one solid line from the deep valley to the top of the mountain, through the path of pain that connects life with death, present with future. Sultan stood on a high rock watching the stream of villagers pass by. He made sure no one was left behind, and before he followed the others, he went in all the houses searching for children or old people who might still be lingering in the village.

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It had already been an eternity, time had lost its value. The minutes and days were even damp with water. All the fountains of the great deep had burst forth and the windows of the heavens had opened. When Noah opened the shutter and looked out through the heavy rain, he thought he saw shadows moving on the horizon beyond the mist. But the voice of his personal slave distracted him. He closed the shutter and turned around.

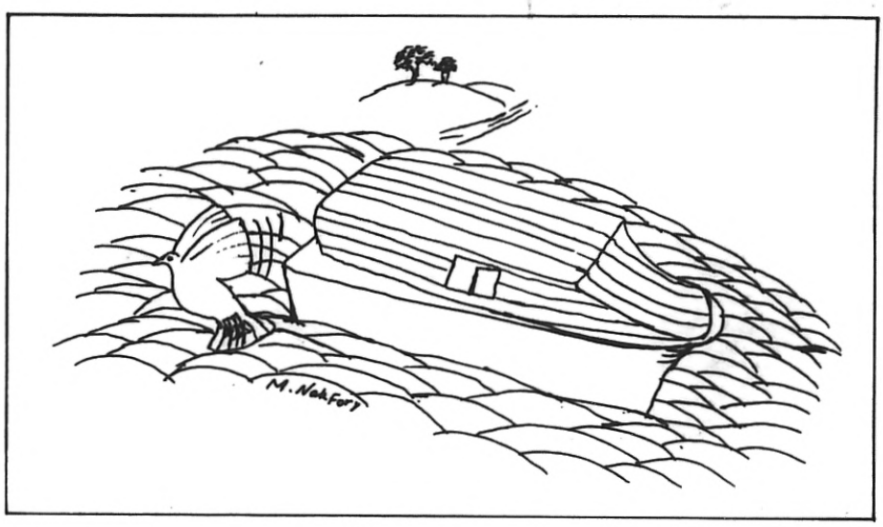
"Master," he said, "We have no food left, lots of drinks, but no food." "But we had a full bin of flour last week," said Noah. "Master, there has been a quarrel among the slaves, and one of them threw all the flour into the flood," said the slave. "Kill him, kill him," shouted Noah, and threw himself on the goatskin. 'It has been a long time,' thought Noah, 'and we are still confined to this floating coffin. I would sell my life right now for a fresh breath of open air.' "Wine, wine, bring me more wine," yelled Noah. The slave, moving with a tired gait, came forth and brought him the jar.

In the last days Noah lost his appetite. He dismissed the girls and the musicians and began drinking heavily until he lived off nothing but wine. One day looking in the mirror, he was astonished to see how old and thin he had become. He noticed with sorrow the blue and black lines underneath his sunken eyes. Every day now the slave brought him the sad news of another death of one of his sons, his daughters, the girls and the musicians. Even the death of his beloved dove.

One morning Noah called his slave, but received no answer. He went searching for him and opening a door found the skeleton of his faithful slave. Shocked and afraid, he opened the shutter and he was astonished to see that the rain had stopped and the promised rainbow crowned the forehead of the universe. Noah noticed shadows descending from the mountain. He shouted out but no one seemed to hear him. He ran to the door of the ark, opened it and before putting his foot once again on the soil, he fell forward, his emaciated body stretched out in the muddy soil.

When the grandson of Sultan approached the ark with his men, he shook Noah, but found the patriarch was already dead.

A flight of birds passed over the head of Sultan's grandson as he walked back down the mountain. ■



Soldiers

Continued from page 5

happened to cross their path. They pulled people off the sidewalks at random, they pulled drivers and passengers out of cars. Everyone in their way was subject to thorough search and interrogation.

Then came my turn. As I was walking alone in the old city I came across the same patrol my friend and I had spoken with earlier. I came directly in their path in the narrow street where few shoppers were about. One of the soldiers immediately began the same routine on me, ordering me to stop and questioning me as to where I was going. He soon recalled, however, that he had seen me earlier with the foreign reporter. He let me go without a search. It is possible he still thought I was also foreign even though I do not look it.

Tiring of my walk, I went to meet my companion hoping he was ready to return to Jerusalem. He told me he had been to see the militant Rabbi Moshe Levinger but had interviewed his wife instead since the rabbi was not home. Even though Mrs Levinger lives in the heart of Hebron surrounded by Arabs, she plainly told my foreign friend, among other things, that "Arabs (in Palestine) do not exist." The Levingers are known leaders among Jewish settlers. Their views reflect those of thousands of settlers who every day roam the West Bank and Gaza streets, parading their fire power hoping that by doing so the Arabs will tire both of theirs and army harassment and emigrate.

Complaints of army and settler maltreatment of the Palestinian population has not only been voiced in Hebron but in every major West Bank city and town and in the Gaza Strip. The army's behaviour has gone beyond mere attempts at humiliation and has now claimed several innocent lives over a four-week period. Yet with every complaint made public the government has responded that the soldiers are merely carrying out orders. Such government approval of settler action and support of army arrogance has left Palestinians disturbed and wary.

It was not difficult for my foreign journalist friend who was here for the very first time to realise in just days of observation that reconciliation between the Arab and Jewish populations of Palestine will be a long time coming in light of army and settler actions. And what is even more remote is any future prospect for peace in which the Palestinian Arabs will be given a fair share of the outcome. ■

Maher Abukhater is a member of Al Fajr*'s editorial staff.*

ARAB PRESS

Local Palestinian newspapers gave most of their attention this week to the repercussions of the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Local papers highlighted PLO leaders' statements that the US was involved in the action. The paper's editorials were united in their condemnation of the operation.

The papers however differed as to the ultimate result of the air raid. *Al Fajr* called for redoubling peaceful efforts while *Al Mithaq* said the raid proved the failure of diplomatic policy.

Other events given prominence were the shootings in Sinai and the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship.

The US and Neutrality

No sooner had the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters been reported, than many countries, organisations and institutions had condemned it. No doubt this moral international stand stems from the conviction of these countries that the Israeli air raid aimed at thwarting the peace efforts in the Middle East. The peace efforts centre around finding a solution to the Palestinian problem through recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent state on its soil. Unlike the countries that condemned the raid and expressed fears that it might hinder the search for a just solution, the US did not hesitate to express 'support' for the raid on the PLO headquarters. It considered the raid a 'legitimate punishment.' The US would have done better to at least have been neutral. It should have prevented its ally Israel from carrying out such a raid, instead of participating in the planning of it. So, we wonder if the US can, in such a case, be an effective party in the search for peace in the area?

AL FAJR
October 3

The Remaining Hope

America's support of the Israeli air raid raises many questions about the mediation role of the US in achieving a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Israeli raid was universally condemned. All observers agree that it constitutes a setback to the peace process and a shock to Arab moderation. The victory of justice and right is inevitable. History proves that the desire for peace will eventually prevail, and that military superiority is a transient phenomenon that soon vanishes. Many empires have disappeared. There is only one fact that remains. It is the hope that the peace process will continue to find a just solution under the umbrella of the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement which was among the many targets in the Israeli raid.

AL QUDS
October 3

We Will Keep theOlive Branch

More than once over the years, the PLO has shown their willingness for peace in the Middle East on the basis of giving the Palestinian people their legitimate rights:

* To self-determination in the form of an independent state. Since the PLO is serious in its pursuit of real peace it has expressed its willingness to pursue diplomatic efforts resulting in a strong push forward.

* In 1981, the American envoy Philip Habib was able to reach a ceasefire agreement between the PLO and Israel. However, Israel, fearing that this ceasefire would lead to a dialogue between the PLO and the US, invaded Lebanon in 1982. Israel's purpose was aimed at uprooting the Palestinian presence in Lebanon through destroying the infrastructure of the PLO, politically and militarily.

This Israeli dream was not fulfilled. The PLO was able, despite its departure from Beirut and Tripoli, to rebuild its military might and political influence. The Amman agreement served as an indicator that the PLO will never weaken. In view of the above, we can say that the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis is no more than a link in the chain of the desperate Israeli attempts to paralyse the PLO. But we will never despair. We shall continue to seek our legitimate rights whatever the sacrifice.

AL FAJR
October 4

The Emergency Arab Summit

The PLO spokespersons declared that the PLO intends to make contacts for the convening of an Arab emergency summit to disuss the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis. The gravity of the event surely requires an Arab summit. It is certain also that the convening of an Arab summit is not an end in itself. It should be accompanied by Arab determination to take practical actions that are commensurate with the weight of the challenge and the extent of American arrogance and insolence. However, we are not optimistic in the light of Arab reactions to the air raid. Their reactions did not go beyond statements of condemnation and condolences. Not one Arab state even threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Washington. Still, these considerations should not prevent us from seeking a unified Arab stand on the official level.

AL SHA'AB
October 5

Soviet-Israeli Relations

Since the ascension of Gorbachev to power in the USSR, the Soviet-Israeli relations have been the topic of statements and speculations both in Moscow and Israel. Their relations were cut off in 1967 following the Israeli aggression which resulted in Israel's occupation of the territories of three Arab countries. Before Gorbachev the talk about restoring relations between the two countries was banned until Israel agreed to withdraw from the occupied territories. Now this ban was removed following the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Fez summit also adopted a peace plan that implicitly recognises Israel's right to exist. And so the wooing began. Gorbachev's statements to the effect that relations with Israel can be restored in the context of a comprehensive settlement may be explained in different ways. They constitute a promise to Israel and they indicate goodwill. They are also a clear sign that Moscow wants to play a role that befits its standing. Though Israel's reaction has not been made public yet, a statement by Shimon Peres indicates that Israel may agree to the participation of the USSR in the peace efforts if diplomatic relations are resumed between the two countries. It is not difficult for Israel to accept the USSR participation now. It already accepted it in 1978.

AL QUDS
October 5

Cairo and Tunis Demonstrations

We have always believed that the Arab peoples only are capable of changing the political map of the area and of defeating all conspiracies aimed at these peoples and their causes, foremost among them the Palestinian cause.

The Cairo and Tunis demonstrations are indicators that the Arab area is facing a new era in which the Arab masses with their nationalist forces will be central. We strongly believe that the coming stage is a change for the better and the defeat of imperialism. These demonstrations are the light and the indicator that give hope to all the nationalist forces.

AL MITHAQ
October 7

In Kufr Kare'

Joint Arab - Jewish Festival Combats Racism

by Baher Ashhab

Over 1000 Arabs and Jews marked a day of solidarity and cooperation in the Arab village of Kufr Kare' in the Triangle October 5.

In what may prove to be a yearly celebration, participants clapped, danced, discussed political issues and listened to rousing speeches for seven straight hours. They all had one common goal in mind: combating racism and the phenomenon of Kahanism.

Organised by the Arab-Jewish Committee For Coexistence and Against Racism, the day was both inspiring and relaxing. What at first seemed to be a family picnic in the woods turned out to be a politically charged festival. Contact between Arabs and Jews appeared limited but their loud cheering after political speeches indicated total agreement concerning their common enemy.

Kufr Kare', on the road to Um al-Fahm and Afula which were both scenes of anti-Kahane protests as well as racist attacks on Arabs, was a suitable place for the solidarity festivities. Families and youth from as far away as Herzliya and Bir Sabe' witnessed the event.

On hand to deliver speeches were Mikhail Fanus and Dov Yermiya, the Arab and Jewish co-secretaries of the movement. Also present were Haifa University Professor Sami Meri'i and a member of the Secretaria of the General Kibbutz Movement Elisa Amir and others. Mohammed Mi'ari, the Arab member of Knesset from the Progressive List for Peace was the only prominent political figure to participate. He, however, kept a low profile throughout the day. The festivities were moderated by left-wing Israel Television personality Yaron London.

A disruptive sense of tension loomed over the festivities at one point when minutes before the end the crowd learned of the murder of two Israelis in the Jerusalem area. Arab speakers however soon mounted the platform and appealed for calm and understanding. "These acts should not hinder our common struggle," shouted Mohammed Masarweh, head of Kufr Kare' local council. "They only prove that the struggle will be long and that there are others who differ with us in strategy to obtain the same objective.

Dancing the dabkeh at Kufr Kare' under the banner "No to Racism, Yes to Peace."/CV photo.

Dov Yermiya, previously a colonel in the Israeli army who fought four wars against the Arabs but was dismissed because of his opposition to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, told *Al Fajr* that such gatherings are crucial if the two peoples are to live together until an acceptable solution to the Palestinian crisis is reached. "These meetings will offer both sides glimpses of each other's fears and aspirations, especially when Israeli society is plagued with anti-Arab and pro-Kahane attitudes.

Although most attendants seemed pleased by the Kufr Kare' meeting, some protested the way it was conducted. Hebrew signs and placards dominated the stage and the wooded field. Most speeches were delivered in Hebrew and only two performances were in Arabic. "I felt as if I was in a Jewish festival meant to wage a liberal Jewish fight against a radical Jewish phenomenon," said Ahmad Srour from neighbouring Um al-Fahm. "More emphasis should have been put on our distinctive Palestinian culture which is not only threatened by radical phenomena, but also by Israelisation attempts."

Srour noted that a large placard behind the stage was in Hebrew. It read "No to Racism, Yes to Peace." Only a smaller one on the far right side of the field read "Peace" in Arabic and Hebrew. But the Arabic word for 'peace' was misspelled.

Nevertheless, participants appeared to enjoy the song and dance sessions performed by top Israeli artists. The music ranged from guitar solos to flute and drum tunes which seemed to please the crowds most. "It is wonderful that people can for a few hours put away years of blood-stained memories and maybe look forward to cooperating on a common cause which they both feel threatened by," television's Yaron London said. He pointed out that an Arab village elder had just helped a five-year-old Israeli child who tripped as she danced the *dabkeh*. "You see. This is what it is all about," he said.

Amnesty Accuses Israel of Torture

The 1984 Amnesty International report released October 9 condemns the repressive measures practised by Israeli authorities against Palestinian residents and detainees in the occupied territories.

The report, which was published in London, said that Palestinian prisoners have been subjected to inhuman treatment, such as the covering of prisoners' heads with sacks and the forcing of prisoners to stand for long hours against a wall.

The report said that Palestinian prisoners are often tortured and cruelly beaten. They are also denied sleep. The report noted that hot and cold showers are used as part of the torture. The report also said that prisoners are threatened with severe punishment and humiliation as well as their families being humiliated and insulted. The AI report condemned the arbitrary arrests for various periods which are practised by the Israeli authorities. Some prisoners have not been taken to court, the report noted. AI also pointed out that the protection which the authorities provided for the prisoners is "insuffient and ineffective."

The report particularly expressed concern over arresting journalists, booksellers, and students on charges of having indirect relations with Palestinians abroad. The report attracted attention to the arrest of students and the placing of them in isolated cells for 18 days.

AI stressed the fact that any Israeli soldier has the power and authority to arrest any Palestinian without reason or clarification. The prisoner can be held for 18 days without trial. The report provided examples of brutal treatment and torture practised by the Israelis against the Palestinians and Lebanese in south Lebanon. Prisoners in south Lebanon were taken to tunnels supervised by the Israeli security forces where they were subjected to severe torture. The report pointed out that the brute technique of torture practised in the occupied territories is similar to the torture practised against the Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners in Lebanon.

The report said that tens of Israeli policemen and border-guards have been charged with maltreatment, but only 17 were convicted and sentenced to light prison terms, or given suspended sentences.

Israel Kills

Continued from page 1

couple while camping south-west of Jerusalem.

Two weeks earlier an Israeli bus was ambushed near Halhoul, resulting in the injury of seven people including two Arabs. Israeli military reports also blame last summer's fatal shooting of an Israeli settler in Ramallah on the same group.

Despite frequent search campaigns, roadblocks and curfews in the Hebron area, the commandos managed to remain at large using caves in hilly areas as their hideouts and living off the land. According to the army reports, the commandos obtained help on several occasions from villagers in the area. This was used as a pretext by the military to arrest several villagers in the home areas of the commandos.

Arab villagers in the area have for several days stayed away from their lands and kept a low profile for fear of Israeli settler attacks similar to those on Halhoul two weeks ago. The Israeli Defence Ministry Coordinator of Activities in the West Bank Shmu'el Goren and the military governors of Bethlehem and Hebron in a meeting with several village *mukhtars* in the area, warned them that such an attack may occur. They told the *mukhtars* from Hussan, Nahalin, Wadi Foukin, Surif and other villages that the authorities "may not be able to protect them from settlers seeking to avenge the commando actions." Following the bus ambush, hundreds of settlers rampaged through Halhoul breaking windows and destroying the property of residents.

Arab Weakness

Continued from page 6

after the raid. He urged the Arab countries to strike at the Palestinian terrorists. In Jerusalem I heard somebody say that the Arab airforce was out to lunch and the Saudi AWACS were busy in detecting some stray camels in the heart of the desert during the raid.

It is a formidable fact that the Arab countries still believe that the talks and direct and indirect negotiations with the US and Israel are profitable. It is also a formidable fact that the Arab radicals are still talking nonsense and sitting idle.

What makes the Arab tragicomedy more tragic is that King Hussein who signed an agreement with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat did not dare to contact him in Tunisia while he was in Washington during the raid. It was also sufficient for President Mubarak to show his fury over the raid by not agreeing to meet in Cairo the Israeli delegation for negotiations over Taba from which Israel refuses to withdraw. The Syrian reaction is more severe bombardment of Tripoli and its residents. There must be a conclusion to this farce. It is the UN Security Council meeting which verbally denounced the raid.

It is obvious that there is a big crisis in the Arab world. It exists in the Arab rulers who have no honour in their countries. They killed their mass aspirations and want to murder the Palestinian cause and revolution. Alas, the days have gone when the Palestinian revolution was so strong that it could reject any interference of the Arab regimes in the affairs of the revolution. The former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the pioneer of Arab nationalism was sharply criticised by the PLO when he agreed to Willian Rogers' political settlement in 1969.

The massacres continued against Palestinians and the splits and divisions continued among them. All Arab regimes interfered in our cause and affairs. They made us donkeys and rode on our backs. We are hypocritical when we praise the hands of Syrians and Jordanians who stabbed us in the backs. We expect more from them.

Let us talk about the PLO infrastructure which was destroyed many times in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Tunisia. Is there a safe place in the world where Palestinians can settle?

However, we will not go bananas. We are not doomed to be red Indians. We will always rebuild ourselves. This time, as Abbas Zaki, the Fatah representative in Aden, said, the unity of the PLO must be established and restored after the brutal raid. The episode of the raid must prompt the secretary-generals of the PLO factions and the Palestinian cadres to call for an emergency meeting to put an end to the current strife within the PLO. There is no alternative and the matter has reached its climax and our people are fed up with splits and the dangerous impact on our existence. Or should we wait for another massacre to rebuild our unity? ■

Said al-Ghazali is a member of Al Fajr's *editorial staff.*

October 3, 1985

ANTI-ISRAELI ATTACKS STEPPED UP

Two petrol bombs were tossed at an Israeli bus in Qalqilya, Israel Radio reported. One of the bombs hit the bus, setting it ablaze. No one was hurt.

The radio said the area of the attack was placed under curfew as soldiers conducted searches for the attackers. No arrests were reported.

Shortly afterward, gunshots were fired at another Israeli bus near the village of Arrabeh. The bus was hit by three bullets, but no casualties were reported. Troops clamped a curfew on the village and began house-to-house searches for the assailants.

In Gaza, a petrol bomb was tossed at an Israeli car. No injuries or damage were reported. Soldiers scoured the area after sealing it off. No detentions were reported.

Two petrol bombs were hurled Wednesday night at the police station in the village of Toubas near Nablus. No injuries or damage were reported. The army imposed a four-hour curfew on the village.

In Nablus, the army closed the area of the outdoor marketplace after youths barricaded themselves behind burning tyres and hurled stones at soldiers and Israeli vehicles. A masked youth was detained.

In the nearby Balata refugee camp, Israeli forces fired teargas bombs to disperse dozens of people demonstrating against the Israeli air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Merchants closed their business as tension ran high in the camp.

Israel TV reported that an Israeli car was stoned in the Shu'fat neighbourhood north of Jerusalem. The car's windshield was smashed. The passengers opened fire on a number of residents, but no one was hurt. Police arrested four Arab youths in connection with the incident, the TV reported.

NAJAH OPENS

An-Najah University reopens after its two-month closure by Israeli military authorities. The Israelis ordered the Nablus university closed August 5 on the pretext that inflammatory material had been found in student unions' offices.

GAZANS JAILED FOR SECURITY CHARGES

An Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced Harun Abdel Hadi Abu Nur, 16, from Jabu'ya refugee camp to 3 years in jail on charges of preparing a petrol bomb and trying to throw it at an Israeli vehicle. The court also sentenced: Hassan Abu Freih, of al-Nusseirat refugee camp, to 1 year in prison and 1 year suspended; Yusef Hammad Abu Amireh, of Khan Younis, to 1 year in prison and 3 years suspended; Ziad Hassan Radi, of al-Shate', to 8 months in prison and 16 months suspended; and Khaled Siam, of al-Shate', to 6 months in prison and 18 months suspended. They were all charged with security offences.

RAMALLAH YOUTH GETS 2 YEARS

An Israeli military court in Ramallah sentenced Ali Flieh Nimer Abu Aliya, a resident of al-Maghir village in the Ramallah district, to 2 years in prison on charges of weapons-possession and membership in a Palestinian organisation.

Hebronite Haj Abd al-Fattah, 135. Is he the world's oldest man?/AO photo.

Head of the Islamic Waqf Sheikh Sa'ed al-Din al-Alami (centre) escorts German President Richard von Weizsaecker (to his right) on a tour of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem./AO photo.

October 4, 1985

BETHLEHEM MUNICIPALITY IN CRISIS

Saudi Arabia has decided to grant 1 million dollars to the Bethlehem municipality for building schools in the town, mayor Elias Freij stated. Last year the Saudi government donated a similar sum to the municipality to help in carrying out a number of projects.

Freij said efforts are currently underway to solve the financial crisis plaguing the municipality. He added that the crisis was due to the fact that the joint Palestinian-Jordanian committee had not granted the municipality any aid for the last 3 years.

BALATA YOUTH JAILED

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Omar Abdel Fattah Khalil Atallah, 20, of Balata refugee camp outside Nablus to 2 years in prison and 3 years suspended. He was charged with stone-throwing and possessing a gun.

October 6, 1985

BOMB FOUND AT JAFFA GATE

An Israeli army patrol discovered a bomb planted in a bus stop at Jaffa Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. Police sappers defused the charge without causing injuries or damage.

BALATA REFUGEES PROTEST AIR STRIKE

Israeli troops sealed off the main entrance to Balata refugee camp near Nablus after residents staged a demonstration to protest Israel's air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Three residents of the camp are said to be among those killed in the attack.

NABLUS PRISONERS REPORTEDLY ESCAPE

Israeli forces cordoned off the area of the Nablus Central Prison after a number of Palestinian security prisoners reportedly managed to escape. Soldiers conducted house-to-house searches in a number of neighbourhoods in the city, but none of the escapees were caught.

October 7, 1985

PETROL BOMB ATTACKS

Two petrol bombs were tossed at Israeli army vehicles in the Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported.

The first attack occurred on the Gaza-Jabalya road, while the second took place near the Tal-Mintar settlement east of Gaza. Soldiers set up checkpoints and detained a number of residents.

SETTLERS OPEN FIRE IN HEBRON

Merchants closed their businesses in the centre of Hebron and residents fled to their homes after Jewish settlers fired gunshots in the area. The army sealed off the area. A number of settlers from Kiryat Arba have reportedly assaulted Arab residents near the settlement.

DHEISHEH YOUTH JAILED

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Imad Mohammed Abdel Fattah Abu Jawdeh, of Dheisheh refugee camp, to 1 year in prison and a similar suspended sentence on charges of stone-throwing.

YASUF LAND GRABBED

Israeli authorities recently confiscated vast areas of land belonging to the village of Yasuf in the Nablus area for the purpose of expanding the nearby Tafuah settlement. In the past, authorities confiscated 200 dunums from the village for the same purpose.

October 8, 1985

MILITARY BUS FIREBOMBED

A petrol bomb was hurled at an Israeli military bus as it passed in front of Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, Israel Radio reported. The bomb exploded but no one was injured.

The radio said soldiers aboard the bus fired gunshots at the assailants, who managed to escape. Troops sealed off the area and began searching for the attackers.

JABALYA YOUTH JAILED

An Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced Mohammed Ma'rouf Mahra, a resident of Jabalya refugee camp, to 2.5 years in prison on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation and preparing an explosive charge.

VILLAGERS TO STAND MILITARY TRIAL

Fourteen residents of the village of Obeidiya east of Bethlehem are to go on trial before an Israeli military court on charges of paving a new agricultural road on their land. Military authorities say the villagers did not receive permission for the new road.

NABLUS BOYS JAILED

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Husam Wa'el Imran, 16, of Nablus, to 3 months in jail, 16 months suspended and a IS300,000 fine on security charges.

The court also sentenced Nuh Mohammed Asi, 17, to a IS200,000 fine on charges of painting (anti-Israeli) graffiti and wearing a shirt with the colours of the Palestinian flag. Asi is a resident of Beit Likia village in the Nablus area.

Syria Achieves Ceasefire in Tripoli

Calm prevailed over the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli last week following three weeks of heavy fighting between rival Lebanese militias.

Over 400 people were reported killed in the fighting and over 300,000 dispersed to neighbouring areas. A Syrian army unit comprising 1000 troops entered the city October 3 and collected heavy weapons from the rival militias. This was in accordance with a ceasefire agreement signed between the Syrian-backed Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and the Islamic Unification Movement (IUM) on October 3.

The agreement called for the militias to surrender their heavy weaponry to Lebanese and Syrian armies and prohibit the carrying of light weapons in public places. Life in the badly damaged city was reported to be getting back to normal as marketplaces reopened and people walked the streets again. Media reports from Tripoli estimated that over 30,000 artillery shells had fallen on the coastal city since September 28.

A Beirut-based group which calls itself the Islamic Liberation Organisation still holds three Soviet diplomats although its demands for an immediate ceasefire in Tripoli have been met. The group, which was unheard of prior to the abduction of the diplomats two weeks ago, has killed one diplomat and threatened to kill the three others if their demands were not met. When their demands were met they did not respond.

The Soviet government ordered the eviction of over 70 of its diplomats and families from the Beirut area and moved them to Damascus. Spokespersons for the two largest Islamic organisations in Lebanon, the IUM and Hizballah, denied involvement in the abduction or knowledge of the identities of the kidnappers. Hizballah went further to warn that the kidnappers might be of foreign or "suspicious origin."

October 7-16

Music: There is a festival of church music at the Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem, with a variety of participants. For further details ring 719927.

October 11

Exhibition: Bethlehem University is holding its Fourth Arabic Calligraphy Exhibition and a Sculpture and Photography Exhibition. Starting at 2:00 pm.

October 12

Theatre: *Sharshouh.* A play for old and young, performed by children from Jerusalem. Written and directed by Radi Shehadeh. In Arabic, English translation available. At the Nuzh/el-Hakawati Theatre, Jerusalem. 12:30 pm. Telephone: 280957, 288189.

October 15

Seminar: The International Committee for Middle East Peace will hold a jurist seminar about the law forbidding contacts with the PLO. In Hebrew. 8:00 pm at Binyamin Ha'umah, Jerusalem. For details ring 03-267399.

October 18

Theatre: *The Story of the Eye and the Tooth.* El-Hakawati again presents their most recent play after months of performances in Jerusalem, the Galilee and Western Europe. At the Nuzha/el-Hakawati Theatre, Jerusalem. 7:00 pm.

Events in the US

October 18 — January 5

Exhibition: The Textile Museum in Washington provides a rare opportunity for the public to view outstanding examples of woven Armenian carpets in an exhibition, "Weavers, Merchants, and Kings."

October 23

Lecture: Meir Merhav, economics editor for the *Jerusalem Post*, presents a lecture, "It's Time to Talk to the PLO," at the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC.

November 7-10

Convention: The Association of Arab-American University Graduates are holding their 18th annual convention, "New Directions for the Arab World, Arab-Americans and the Palestinian Issue," at the Americana Congress Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.

Abu Ghosh

Continued from page 7

justice prior to 1948. He even gave us Coca Cola and Kach T-shirts," 18-year-old Omar Ilian said. Kahane was reportedly furious when after the elections he learned that those who cast their votes from Abu Ghosh gave them to left-wing mainly Arab candidates.

This is the kind of irony with which the residents of Abu Ghosh have been forced to live for the last 37 years. Because of the actions of a group of their elders, they have been branded as 'friends of Zion." Yet the truth is they are treated no differently than any other Arab community. Abu Ghosh youth are harassed and even abused during leisure or work trips inside Israel. They are discriminated against in the work market and they often are arrested and imprisoned for the slightest protest activity.

Mahmoud Abu Qtaish has been fired from a number of jobs because he is an Arab, he said. He and a few other young men are detained by the military prior and during national Palestinian remembrance days. He believes that some 60 percent of Abu Ghosh men cannot find jobs because of the discrimination. Many have considered emigration as a means of survival, especially since they feel rejected by West Bank Arabs who view them as spies and traitors.

The issue of enlisting in the Israeli army brought it all out in the open once again. Thirteen-year-old Ali Ilian said, "I'd rather die than ever become an Israeli." He said that although all of his teachers are Arabs and Muslims, and have never touched on political issues relating to his village, the Jewish deputy administrator has. She is 70-year-old "Rachel," as she is known in the village, and has been teaching Hebrew at the only school in the village for over 30 years. "She told me that the Jews had suffered so much at the hands of Arabs, that when I grow up I should join the Israeli army to defend the state and prevent further suffering," said Ali. When asked if he believed Rachel, he said smilingly, "The little boys maybe, but I always ask my mother and she tells me the truth."

To Enlist or Not to Enlist

Soon after the 1948 war, the Israeli army formed what was called a "minorities unit." It was comprised of a few dozen Druze and Circassian Arabs who for unclear reasons chose to ignore the call for solidarity by all Palestinians in the new state. Both the Druze and Circassian communities were at that time highly isolated from the rest of the population, for they had a unique social and cultural structure which had remained unchanged for centuries. Mainly poor farming communities, these two had virtually no educated or skilled elite, nor the economic means to resist the quick change that befell Palestine as it was rapidly being colonised.

They were thus an easy target for the Zionist establishment who promised them financial benefits and employment if they enlisted in the army. "For obvious reasons, Israel's Arab citizens were exempted from compulsory military service. However, the Druze community of 35,000 and the smaller Circassian community, had a special request: it demanded it be subject to conscription," writes Yigal Allon in his book *The Shield of David: The Story of Israel's Armed Forces.* "All young male Druze serve in the Israeli army, or more often in the ranks of the borderpolice, and do so with conspicuous valour," wrote Allon.

Compulsory service for the Druze and the Circassians was however imposed in 1956; but, according to a leading figure in the Druze community, the conformity of certain Druze leaders at that time to conscription was the "worst thing that ever happened to the Druze community," In a recent interview with the Nazareth-based *Al Ittihad* Sheikh Jamal Miady warned other Arab communities inside the 'green line' "not to fall for a similar trap." "The conscription of Druze men in 1956 has only worsened the conditions in our communities. The Druze are still discriminated against and are oppressed in all aspects including their internal religious affairs. Most of our lands have also been confiscated regardless of whether we served in the army or not," Miady told *Al Ittihad.* "May we be a beneficial lesson to any Arab who falls for similar deceit."

In 1982 as the Israeli army invaded southern Lebanon, front line Druze soldiers found themselves face to face with Lebanese Druze fighting alongside the Palestinians on the Lebanese front. This created a complex moral dilemma most of them could not deal with. Sounds of protest were heard from within the Druze community demanding that the men not be sent to the front lines. The more Druze killed in the invasion, the more intense the protest became.

Hundreds of soldiers deserted and were reported to be fighting along with their Lebanese counterparts. Dozens of the soon-to-be recruited escaped conscription and were treated accordingly by Israeli authorities with the imposition of a 17-year prison sentence in some cases. Ninety young men from the village of Yirka deserted in the first six months in 1984 alone. Five hundred others from various villages were discharged within the same period because of "psychological inability."

Following the death of 13 Druze soldiers in a bomb attack on the Israeli army headquarters in Sidon in April of 1983, thousands of Druze residents marched in their villages denouncing Israel and its role in Lebanon. "We have never felt so Palestinian in our lives. We then knew what it was like not to own one's destiny," a Druze villager reportedly said. The Druze Initiating Committee, established in 1974, demanded the immediate cancellation of compulsory conscription and has since kept up its campaign for that purpose, but to no avail.

"I warn the people of Abu Ghosh against any Israeli attempts to delude them into serving in the army," Sheikh Miady, who heads the DIC, told *Al Ittihad.* He suggested that the draft notice posted in Abu Ghosh last month was a test to learn the reaction of young people in case the army considered such a step.

Not quite, argues Farid Abu Ghosh. He said that the military authorities will never give guns to the Arabs, no matter what their background is. The Druze and Circassians were a different case altogether, said Farid, because of their isolation prior to the draft. "We are counting on that difference," he said.

Haj Musa totally rejects the idea of drafting young Abu Ghosh men, or so he said. He refused, however, in an interview to clarify why he felt this way. But, according to a resident of Abu Ghosh, "Haj Musa would have a lot to fear if young people carry arms in the village. His life would be in danger." Others suggested it might have been a personal experience of his that made him dislike the idea, regardless of his loyalty to Israeli rule.

The *Post* report of September 27 read: "Ten years ago, partly as a result of political pressure from the *mukhtar* (Haj Musa), four men were accepted to the Israeli army." What the article failed to report, however, was that one of the men was 20-year-old Hazem Abu Ghosh, the *mukhtar's* own son. Hazem served for three years, mainly patrolling the occupied territories. Only a few weeks after his discharge he set fire to himself and died. According to a friend from his youth, "It was the psychological strain that killed him."

The three others were never the same after service. One "Fathi Jabr" has become "Yossi" and resides now in an Israeli neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The other was imprisoned for four years for theft and the third is reputed to be living in "severe depression and total alienation" since his discharge.

"If an Abu Ghosh youngster ever thinks of enlisting, it would be because he has been deluded and feels he has no purpose in life," said Mahmoud Abu Qtaish. Many of them, he said, are lost between their Arab feelings and the Judaisation campaign by village elders and Israeli policy makers. This has been the main reason for many turning to religion. Abu Qtaish estimated that at least 45 percent of the village youth have become strict Muslims as a method of self protection.

Regardless of Israeli media portrayal of this village, it is an Arab village and, judging from the attitude of most of its youth, it promises to become even more Arab in the future. "Once the old corrupt generation goes, our ties with the Palestinians will be stronger than ever. Israeli society is simply not for us," said Mahmoud. ■

US Arabs Hurt by Israeli - US Arrogance

by Ghassan Bishara
Our Washington, DC, Correspondent

For many observers in the United States — particularly the resident Palestinians — the American reaction to Israel's raid on the PLO in Tunis serves as a grim reminder of American disdain for the Palestinians. It also highlights once again, as did the Lebanon War, the general Arab paralysis in confronting US policy in the Middle East.

Many agree that Arab inaction and paralysis is undoubtedly the cause of continued American indifference to Arab interests and wellbeing. "Arab governments," observed Fathi Ali, a Palestinian graduate student in Washington, "didn't do anything when Israel sent 120,000 soldiers into Lebanon in 1982." It appears that they are also not doing anything after a similar action in Tunisia.

The raid on the PLO offices in Tunis, said Khalil Jahshan, of the Palestine Research and Educational Centre, "has undoubtedly dealt a final blow to the current efforts" aimed at achieving peace under the Amman formula. The blame for that, he added, can't be placed solely on Israel. The American position, instilling a sense of justification in Israel's action, "has clearly discredited the US in the region and disqualified them from a future role as a neutral peacemaker."

Israel's confidence in US support certainly strengthened the Israeli decision to bomb the PLO offices, killing Tunisian and Palestinian civilians. The United States, Mohammed Hallaj also of the PREC said, knows that the Arab states "are not concerned about the Palestinians.... and don't care what happens to them." The invasion of Lebanon is but one of many examples, he said. Whenever Arab leaders visit Washington, Hallaj continued, "they only make perfunctory remarks about the Palestinian rights [which] American officials read and interpret... as a lack of honest commitment" on the part of the Arabs towards the Palestinians and their demands.

The American stance, regarding the issue of Palestine and the Palestinians, is not difficult to understand. It is founded on "subservience to Israel's policy in the Middle East, and in addition, is an extension of how Israel perceives the issue," said Jahshan. US policy, he added, does not show "creativity and initiative, and basically is not made in Washington, but [is] always a reaction to Israeli policies and measures taken in Tel Aviv."

Expressing a somewhat different point of view, Hallaj said that it is a half truth and only part of the story to assert that US policy toward the Palestinians is dictated by the Israelis or American Zionists alone. "I am personally convinced," Hallaj said, "that America is at war with the Palestinians out of its own considerations." Hallaj asserts the US believes that the fulfilment of Palestinian national rights "would be a destabilising factor in the Middle East... and part of stated American policy is to fight what it considers to be destabilising factors." All expressed "no surprise" in the American stance, adding, "This has been the American position from the very beginning, and will continue to be their position. This should be clear to us all."

For those Arab governments who cared to comment on the Israeli bombing of PLO headquarters and Tunisian civilians outside Tunis, the White House remarks justifying it were apparently more painful than the attack itself. This attitude, of course, reflects a continued refusal by most Arab governments to identify the true American stance — full and unquestioning support of almost every action taken by Israel against the Arab people and their interests."

The bombing of the PLO headquarters outside the Tunisian capital, and the killing and wounding of more than 156 Palestinians and Tunisians, was condemned not only by most Arab governments, but also by most of the world community, with the noted exception of the United States. When asked to comment upon the Israeli raid, President Reagan said that Israel has the right to hit back against terrorists, "if they can pick out the people responsible." He added that he has "great faith in [Israeli] intelligence capabilities" in selecting the proper target to strike. President Reagan, very simply, endorsed the Israeli raid against the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

Israel, using American-made F-15 fighters, refuelled in mid-air and flew more than 1,500 miles in order to bomb and strafe settled areas; and, much like Beirut, it wrought devastation upon the Tunisian and Palestinian civilians who happened to be present. In doing so, Israel not only violated international law and the sovereignty of the Tunisian state, but also breached the US Arms Export Control Act which prohibits a recipient of American arms from utilising those arms outside of its territorial boundaries or in an offensive manner. The reaction of most Arab governments was one of anger and condemnation, and for those especially close to the United States, profound disappointment.

An American journalist, commenting on Arab disillusionment with the initial White House reaction, said that he could understand why Arab governments continue to feel alarmed and betrayed by such American responses.

The Israeli raid against one of the most peaceful of Arab nations, albeit one of the friendliest to the US, and subsequent White House endorsement of it, genuinely outraged some Arab governments — "as if they have any reason to expect any better from the US," quipped another American journalist on his way to a State Department briefing.

What amazes most Middle East observers here in Washington is the infinite amount of credibility that the US garners from Arab governments, irregardless of American posturing on issues that are dear to the Arab people. In fact, it is continued Arab willingness to accept US policy, whether it's endorsing the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, or upholding the latest Israeli aggression in Tunisia, that seems to reinforce American disregard for the Arabs in general. At times, Americans, including present and former officials, await a "proper" Arab reaction to a particular event, only to be disappointed when it fails to materialise. An official, commenting on Reagan's endorsement of the raid, said that it was the US who originally asked Tunisia to grant the PLO a base after their evacuation from Beirut in 1982. Now, he is reported to have said, the US condones the bombing of those same offices in Tunis.

There was a time when Arab-American relations were balanced and a perceived hostile act by the United States was countered by a similar Arab act. The head of an Arab-American organisation here in Washington naively expected some Arab governments to recall their ambassadors from the American capital. Instead, he said, the Arab governments merely issued half-hearted statements of disappointment with the White House stance.

Many agree that whatever must be done to rectify the situation in the future any decision must include most, if not all, of the Arab governments. Reliance upon the Arab governments, however, leads one to conclude that the situation might never be rectified. The Palestinians agree that the reason for continued Israeli attacks upon Arab and Palestinian targets, as well as for implicit US consent for such actions, rests squarely in the apathy toward Arab interests expressed by so many Arab governments.

Palestinians in Washington, however, do believe there are actions to be taken by the Arab regimes. "Since nothing is being done," Jahshan said, "there is a hell of a lot that could be done." He suggested some type of unified Arab stand should be directed against the United States when the latter adopts a clearly anti-Arab policy. They agree that decisive Arab League action must be taken rather than the standard and seemingly ineffective issuance of statements by League officials. Based on Jahshan's understanding of the US, he believes that "the US will understand and become responsive in terms of changing its attitudes," if they are made to realise that the Arab people are dissatisfied with the current American position regarding issues important to them. This, however, requires a clear definition of interests by the Arab governments.

"Regardless of what issue is being discussed, the basic point," said Hallaj, "is that the Arab states are not governed by governments which make decisions based upon national interests; this is the most fundamental sickness in the Arab world, and the most basic explanation for the behaviour of Arab governments." Hallaj said that Arab governments are motivated by sub-interests such as dynastic, personal or partisan factors.

To Ali, the only answer to official American and Israeli disrespect for Arab and Palestinian concerns is continued armed struggle. He doesn't believe that anything will result from peaceful processes. Only by confronting armed struggle will the Israeli authorities be convinced that their security cannot be maintained unless the Palestinians have achieved their rights.

US disregard for the Palestinians seems to include the victims of the latest Israeli air raid as well. In a statement issued by the Department of State on October 2, the spokesperson extended the "sincere condolences of the United States government to the government of Tunisia over the loss of life of its citizens in the raid..." Phrased in this way, Hallaj observed, the United States seems to "pointedly try to say that we don't give a damn about the Palestinians who died." "Hallaj concluded that this clearly explains the Reagan Administration's way of dealing with any underdog, and the Palestinians are clearly one. ■